

Commentary

September 2008

How to Manage Savagery

Bret Stephens

Obama's "Talking" Cure
Joshua Muravchik

Can Libel Tourism Be Stopped?
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Hillel Halkin

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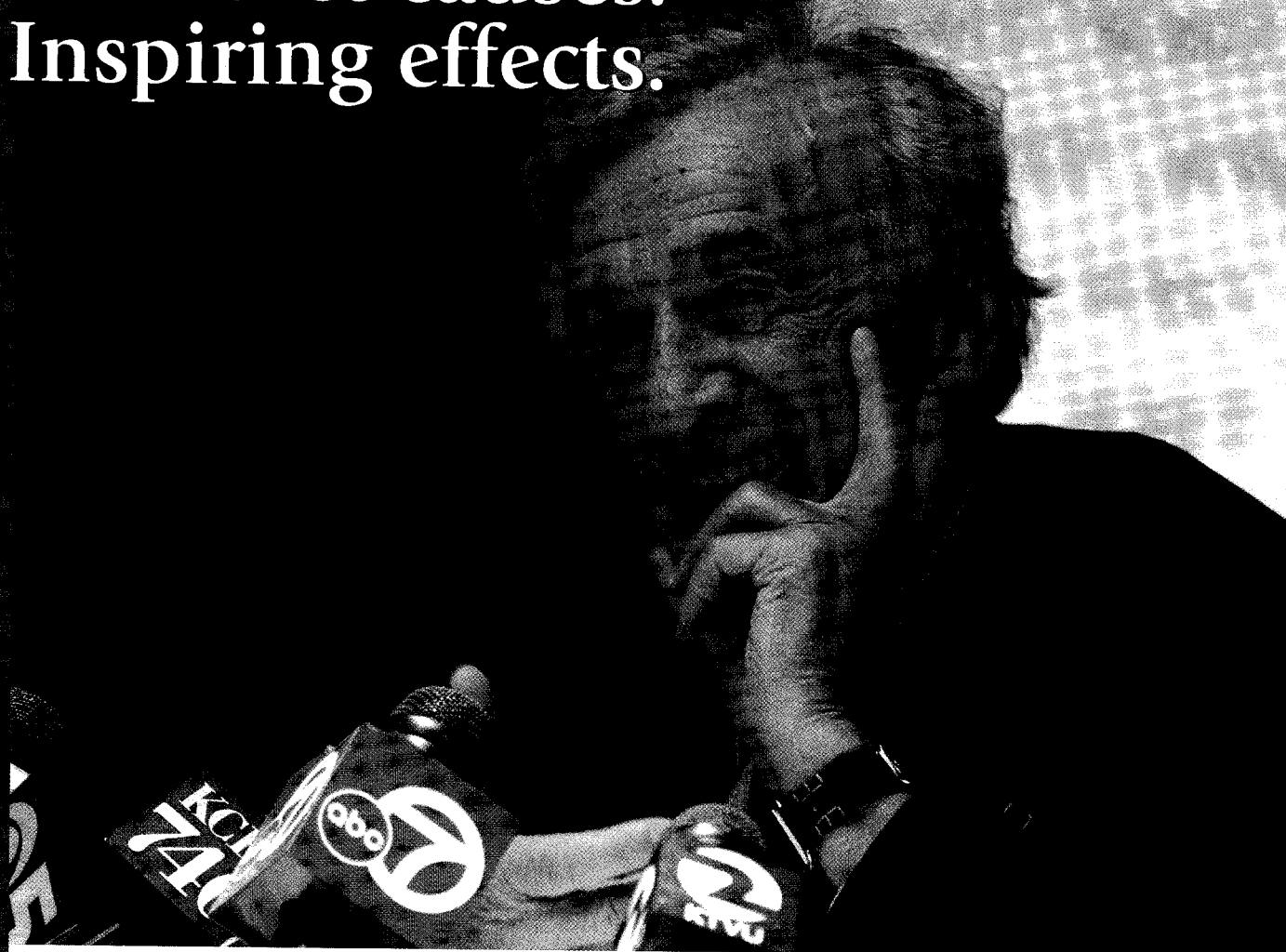
Owning the Past
Steven C. Munson

The Heroine Who Wasn't
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Letters from Readers

Russian Winter

TO THE EDITOR:

In "Putin & Co: What Is to Be Done?" [May], Richard Pipes offers characteristically profound insights into the Russian situation. His picture of a pre-modern polity, characterized by atomization, alienation, and a strong urge for stability is not pretty, but it is certainly accurate. Its government, the Putin regime, is legitimized by economic growth, a dubious provision of "stability," and little else. Official Russian statements are as inconsistent as they are cynical, but they also reflect the lack of a real ideology.

Russia's obsolete politics stand in sharp contrast to its thriving economy. Thanks to Boris Yeltsin's reforms in the 1990's, Russia now benefits from a vibrant capitalist economy. The growth of the middle class is stronger than usually perceived. According to the World Bank, small and medium-sized

businesses account for some 45 percent of Russia's GDP. Russia has five million registered enterprises and almost as many individual entrepreneurs. By the broad UNESCO definition of higher education, over two-thirds of Russian youth go to college. Russia's GDP per capita (in terms of purchasing power parity) is now one-third of that of the U.S. If present trends continue, Russia will have the fifth-largest economy in the world by 2020.

Just how long Russia's obsolete authoritarianism can manage under the "stress" of its market economy remains to be seen. According to Freedom House, only eight countries in the world are richer than Russia and more authoritarian: they are Singapore and seven small oil states, hardly Russia's peers. By the standards of Transparency International, the only country wealthier and more corrupt than Russia is Equatorial Guinea. Russia has sim-

ply grown too rich to be so undemocratic and corrupt.

Vladimir Putin's crooked rule has been made possible by the sudden windfall yields from the international oil trade and post-imperial nostalgia, but it is not likely to last. Oil prices will eventually moderate, and the dysfunction of the Russian state will become evident to everyone as modernization proceeds. The present role of the secret police is so outmoded and pernicious that it is likely to ignite a public uproar in the coming years. Too many accumulated problems, from health care to infrastructure and law enforcement, cannot be resolved without the mediation of democracy. Russia will have to break with its Stalinist past sooner rather than later.

ANDERS ÅSLUND
*Peterson Institute for
International Economics
Washington, D.C.*

TO THE EDITOR:

Any discussion of the

sorry state of Russia's relations with the West invariably comes back to NATO enlargement. Richard Pipes agrees with the conventional wisdom that the West "has indeed been oblivious of Russian sensitivities, and has broken promises made when Moscow dissolved the Warsaw Pact."

There is no question that NATO enlargement has been an extremely difficult pill for the Russian elite to swallow. (In our book, *A Tale of Two Worlds*, my co-author Mike McFaul and I quipped that "NATO is a four-letter word.") But that does not mean the West has been "oblivious," nor does it mean that it has reneged on promises.

In the 1990's, President Clinton delayed making any firm announcement about NATO's plans to expand until after Boris Yeltsin was reelected, so as not to hurt his candidacy. The Clinton team worked hard to find other ways to draw Russia closer to the West—e.g., in-

cluding Russia in the Implementation Force created at the close of the war in Bosnia and inviting Russia to join the G-7.

As for the question of “broken promises” to Russia, many cite then-Secretary of State James Baker’s comment at the start of the German unification process that NATO forces would not extend “one inch to the east.” But those early comments were made in reference to forces within Germany at the time. The West had not made any commitment about the nature of its future relations with countries like Poland.

Others point to assurances given to Boris Yeltsin in 1993 by then-Secretary of State Warren Christopher. When the two met to discuss the Partnership for Peace initiative to build trust between NATO and Eastern Europe, Christopher did not draw new lines and only vaguely referred to NATO’s possible future expansion. Yeltsin could have been forgiven for being upset the following September when President Clinton broke the news to him about the enlargement. But this, too, does not mean “obliviousness” or “broken promises.”

There is no question that the issue is complex, and many in the West underestimated how deeply the NATO policy has troubled Russian officials. But those who persist in raising this issue as the crux of the problem fail to ask what would have happened had NATO not expanded. The enlargement of the European Union would likely have been delayed significantly. Countries aspiring to join the club of Western democracies would have been left on the outside.

Perhaps some would have failed to consolidate democracy. It does not even require conjuring up visions of other Yugoslavias; after all, look at Slovakia in the mid-90’s. The West should certainly consider Russian sensibilities in crafting its policies, but it does not need to apologize for promoting democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, including in places like Ukraine and Georgia.

JAMES GOLDGEIER
*Council on Foreign Relations
Washington, D.C.*

TO THE EDITOR:

In his otherwise penetrating essay, Richard Pipes writes: “The Russians regard NATO, not without reason, as a hostile alliance directed against them, and they intensely resent the fact that it has expanded to their very frontiers.” But what hostile act or word has NATO directed at Russia? It is a myth that NATO expanded toward Russia’s borders only after the cold war; NATO bordered with Russia or the Soviet Union from the very beginning—see Norway, Turkey, and the state of Alaska.

The expansion of NATO to include Central Europe and the Baltic States has brought security and stability to the region by easing threats against former “satellites” of the Soviet Union. Non-NATO countries like Ukraine and Georgia face regular intimidation from Russia. In any case, NATO, being a defensive alliance, has never represented a threat to Russia. Moscow knows this, and its NATO alarmism is just rhetoric for domestic consumption.

ROMAN JOCH
*Civic Institute
Prague, Czech Republic*

RICHARD PIPES writes:

I appreciate the favorable comments of Anders Åslund, author of the excellent recent work *Russia’s Capitalist Revolution*. He is right to note the contradictions between Russia’s maturing economy and its style of government, but I think he is too optimistic in concluding that “Russia will have to break with its Stalinist past sooner rather than later.”

The contradiction between economic freedom and political dictatorship can also be resolved in another way, namely, by abolishing or severely limiting economic freedom. I think that if and when the masters of today’s Russia decide that private enterprise challenges their authority, as eventually it is certain to do, they will be more inclined to give up prosperity than power. They have no inhibitions in centralizing in their hands control of the natural resources that constitute the bulk of Russia’s wealth.

I believe that James Goldgeier and Roman Joch underestimate the prevalent antipathy and fear of NATO that is widespread in post-Soviet Russia. We know from public-opinion polls that a majority of Russians regard NATO as a hostile military alliance and are very sensitive about its encroachment on territories that until 1991 were, in effect if not in name, theirs. They do not understand why, given that they have dissolved the Warsaw Pact, the West not only maintains NATO but expands it to their borders.

We should at least understand this concern; are we not exceedingly sensitive to powers perceived as hostile encroaching on the Americas? Objections to

NATO’s expansion in Russia are not merely “rhetoric for domestic consumption” but a deeply felt attitude.

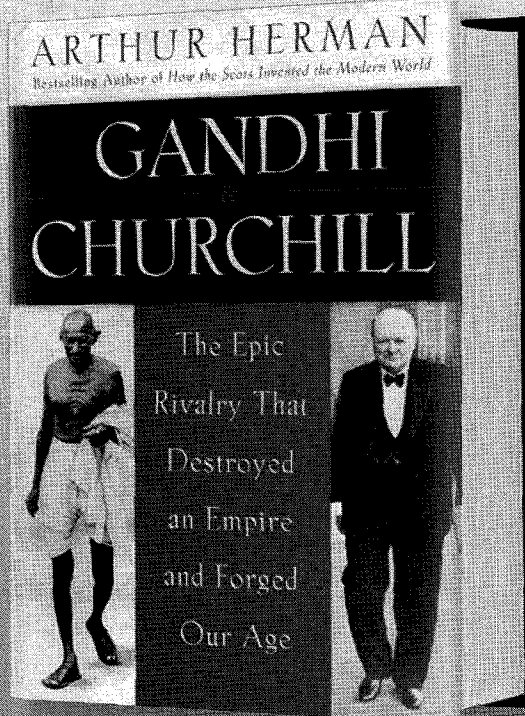
Reforming Reform

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer provides an interesting overview of the history of Reform Judaism and cites many of the critical challenges facing the movement today [“What Does Reform Judaism Stand For?,” June]. But his pessimistic conclusions appear to be based on a “remarkable statement” supposedly issued by me that in fact I never made. Moreover, Mr. Wertheimer interprets it in a way that directly contradicts all of my writings and speeches on the subject.

As reported erroneously in the Jewish press, my “statement” was this: “if you take [Jewish observance] upon yourself as an obligation rather than as a choice, you’ve reached the point at which you’re no longer a Reform Jew.” My actual words dealt with the difference between the Jew who accepts the obligations of the halakhic system in its entirety—all 613 commandments in the Torah—and the Jew who feels obligated by some but not all of the commandments. I suggested that except in the rarest of instances, the former is not seen as a Reform Jew either by himself or by the Reform movement. Drawing on the bastardized version of these remarks and without checking with me, Mr. Wertheimer concludes, incredibly, that I believe it is wrong for a rabbi or congregant to “flirt with the basic concept of religious

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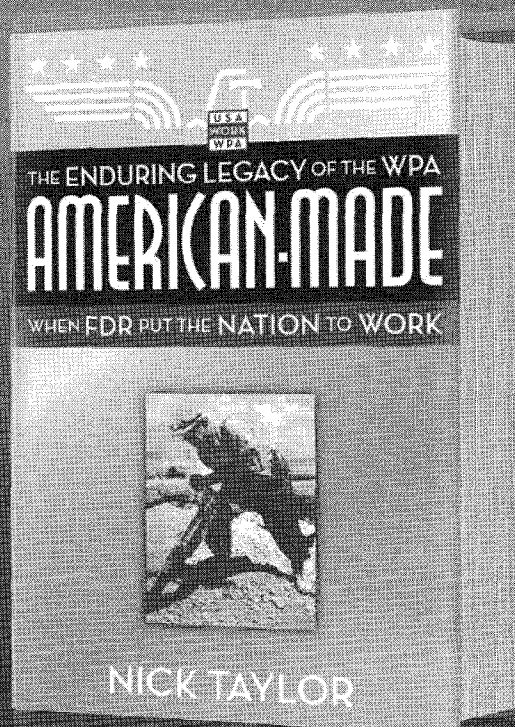
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obligation, or venture too close to traditional Jewish observances." He attributes similar sentiments to other leaders of the movement.

In fact, I have repeatedly stated that I welcome the return of the word "*mitzvah*" (commandment) to the Reform vocabulary precisely because it asserts the idea of Jewish obligation. The Reform rabbinate as a whole has taken a similar position, and the concept was given a central place in the Pittsburgh Principles that were adopted by the movement in 1999. Like many Reform thinkers, I have struggled in my writings with the question of how the modern Jew can reconcile autonomy and obligation; despite the complexity of the task, I continue to believe that a Reform Jew need not—and should not—renounce either one or the other.

RABBI ERIC H. YOFFIE
Union for Reform Judaism
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer has written a perceptive if flawed analysis of the state of Reform Judaism. He is correct that the movement's commitment to personal autonomy has become problematic. An earlier generation of Reform leaders believed that Reform Jews would engage with the broad scope of the Jewish tradition and make their Jewish decisions based on "commitment and knowledge." We have mastered autonomy very well; the "commitment and knowledge" part has not been as successful. Like the head of Reform's Hebrew Union College, Rabbi David Ellenbogen, many Reform Jews long for a more communitarian form of Judaism that

would willingly surrender some autonomy for the sake of building a Jewish future.

But the blame is not to be cast only on the Reform movement. Ever since the late 18th century, all Jews have located themselves along a broad spectrum of beliefs and behaviors in their re-imagining of Jewish life. Each modern denomination of Judaism has brought unique gifts to the table, and Mr. Wertheimer might have given credit to Reform for dealing with the Jewish world as it is, not as we might have hoped it would turn out.

But for him, even the movement's re-appropriation of certain traditions draws a measure of criticism. Thus, Reform's new prayer book is evidence of "healthy openness and self confidence or, perhaps, a sudden loss of direction" (I would suggest the former). His critique of the movement's approach to non-Jews is perplexing. "How," he asks, "are synagogues to teach non-Jews about Judaism while simultaneously working to increase the knowledge of their Jewish members?" Well, we can treat all who thirst for Jewish wisdom—both Jews and "the strangers within our gates"—as worthy. Can Judaism not compete in the marketplace of ideas? Do we "lose" our heritage by teaching it to Gentile seekers?

Contrary to what Mr. Wertheimer suggests, the Reform movement does not condone intermarriage. (What possible condemnation, at any rate, could change the present sociological situation?) Nor has Reform been relativistic about its commitment to fostering unequivocally Jewish families. In 1995, the

movement adopted a resolution declaring that while its religious schools welcomed children of interfaith families, simultaneous education in another faith tradition was inappropriate and unworkable. Whatever individual Jews may think or do, Reform synagogues are not value-free institutions. They exist to create Jews.

Finally, Mr. Wertheimer is to be thanked for publicizing the survey data indicating that 44 percent of Reform Jews profess not to "have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people" or to "feel very emotionally attached to Israel." This is nothing less than alarming. Whether it can be explained by the loss of ethnic loyalties among middle-class Americans or the triumph of a therapeutic culture that nourishes "the Jew within," Reform Jewish leadership must rise to the challenge of re-connecting Reform Jews to peoplehood. Universalism has been a major success; a healthy dose of "tribalism" could turn out to be just what the doctor ordered.

RABBI JEFFREY K. SALKIN
Atlanta, Georgia

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer's critique of Reform Judaism is cogent and devastating. Reveling in a putative heyday of numerical superiority, Reform leaders are still fascinated with the game of boundary-blurring at the expense of integrity and long-term survival. The truth is painful: the movement is shrinking, not growing. Its membership rolls are inflated by the soft rejection of alienated affiliation.

Here is another painful truth: Reform cannot accommodate success. It strug-

gles to take "yes" for an answer. Enthusiastic young adults in the movement—not a large group, to be sure—are driven away. For them the choice is either admission to the rabbinical track at Hebrew Union College (under its budgetary and movement-imposed constraint to "educate" pulpit rabbis only) or drifting outside the movement and its tepid gravitational pull. Pardes, a distinguished egalitarian yeshiva in Jerusalem, sees many "former Reform Jews" who have discovered the wonder of Judaism—its way of life, its texts, its depth, its vast intellectual history—but who have felt themselves rejected by Reform institutions that cannot tolerate or find a place for their eager embrace. Reform's loss is modern Orthodoxy's gain.

There is also a growing recognition within Reform congregations that we are not sustaining ourselves. "Former Conservative Jews" are still passing through Reform on their way out of the communal orbit, but the movement struggles to hold on to the affiliation (much less the emotional adherence) of its own native children. The hallmark "outreach" to mixed-married couples (now reduced to a simple non-judgmental embrace) has given many institutions a short-term membership succor that masks what can only be a cynical frustration. For those concerned about the prospects for Judaism in North America, Jack Wertheimer has accurately and brilliantly depicted a deeply troubling reality.

RABBI
CLIFFORD E. LIBRACH
United Jewish Center
Danbury, Connecticut

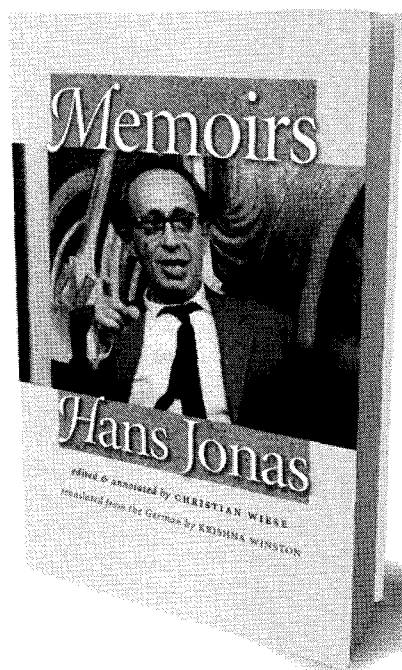
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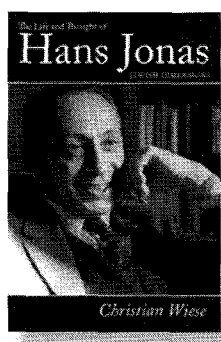
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When Hans Jonas died in 1993 at the age of 89, he was revered among American scholars specializing in European philosophy, but his work had not yet made great inroads among a wider public. Conversely, in Germany during the 1980s, when Jonas himself was an octogenarian, he became a veritable intellectual celebrity, owing to the runaway success of his 1979 book, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, a philosophical work that sold 200,000 copies, and is considered extraordinarily timely today.

This memoir provides nuanced pictures of German Jewry during the Weimar Republic, of German Zionism, of the Jewish emigrants in Palestine during the 1930s and 1940s, and of German Jewish émigré intellectuals in New York. In addition, Jonas outlines the development of his work, beginning with his studies under Husserl and Heidegger and extending through his later metaphysical speculations about "God after Auschwitz."

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TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer's most perceptive observation is that the question of whether "American Reform [was] built upon a structured ideology" or "primarily reflect[ed] a series of pragmatic adjustments to the shifting scene" continues to reverberate. For the past several decades, Reform Jews have championed the centrality of "personal choice" in one's approach to Judaism. This is a seductive motto, not least because it covers up the widening gap between the articulated ideals of Reform and the conventional practices of its adherents. "Personal choice" can confer ideological validity upon the most haphazard and unreflective religious decisions.

To understand how ideology has become obsolete in Reform Judaism, one need only look at the fate of the movement's extensive literature. Volumes of thoughtful responsa and guides to Jewish practice, mostly unknown to the laity and too seldom consulted by the rabbis, gather dust in libraries. And why not: such literature is often at odds with a Reform Judaism for which "personal choice" is the central value.

What Mr. Wertheimer does not say (but I will) is that the language of choice is passé. No one disputes the fact that individuals are free to decide what they will and will not observe. Teachers from all denominations of Judaism appeal to the "relevance" of the tradition in terms of "personal meaning" that acknowledge the supremacy of the autonomous self. But personal choice cannot be *the* core principle: we limit our autonomy as we enter into a religious community. This is at the heart

of the idea of a covenant.

If the motto of "personal choice" is insufficient, the more enhanced slogan of "informed choice" is unrealistic in the context of contemporary Reform. Becoming "informed" is not as simple as studying a snippet of text about a particular issue; it entails immersing oneself in a 3,000-year-old tradition and its literature, most of which remains inaccessible to the vast majority of Reform Jews. If the movement were sincerely committed to "informed choice," the demand for high-level study would be widespread, and far more time and resources would be devoted to it. But when young Reform Jews are discouraged from adopting traditional practices they have encountered through study, one gets the impression that "informed choice" often means only the choice *not* to observe.

Mr. Wertheimer argues that the movement should formulate "standards for committed living." Perhaps this would help. But knowing that many such standards already exist and are ignored, the movement might do better to promote new and emerging models of seriously engaged Reform communities. As "choice" increasingly becomes a given—the starting point rather than the central creed—Reform Jews will be ready for a deepened conversation about *mitzvah*, obligation, and the ways in which the self is enhanced by moving beyond the self.

RABBI LEON MORRIS
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

I join others in thanking Jack Wertheimer not only for his prescient attempt to figure out what Reform Ju-

daism stands for, but also for his life work brilliantly tracing the perils and possibilities of American Jewish life.

One of his many incisive questions is this: "Was American Reform built upon a structured ideology—on strongly held principles—or did it primarily reflect a series of pragmatic adjustments to the shifting scene?" This is a hard matter to resolve: how does one distinguish between principled agreement and cowardly submission to passing whims? The present state of the intermarriage debate in Reform is a case in point. As congregants increasingly demand that rabbis officiate at intermarriages, an increasing number of rabbis are developing theological justifications for doing so, citing the values of outreach and inclusiveness. Whether the reasons are genuine or made with one eye to the next contract negotiation, the intermarriage wars in Reform Judaism are effectively over.

The rank and file was also the impetus behind the replacement of the neo-Protestant confirmation service with the traditional bar-mitzvah ceremony, the repudiation of the anti-Zionism of Reform's 1885 Pittsburgh Platform, the creation of a gender-neutral liturgy, and the dramatic growth in the proportion of female students at Hebrew Union College. The dynamic is not much different in the other denominations.

The decline of Mr. Wertheimer's own Conservative movement shows what happens when the leaders of a movement tell the people that they know what is best for them. Conservative Judaism is dying precisely because it has by

turns resisted the desire of its members for egalitarian worship, the ordination of women, and openness to intermarried families.

I believe that Judaism organized around movements is a dying anachronism of the 19th century. As independent seminaries continue to grow, the official denominations will lose their monopoly on placement. As the cost of synagogue membership grows, Jewish federations will begin to offer free synagogues in Jewish community centers. Entrepreneurial leaders will become boutique rabbis who serve the needs of their flock outside any movement structure. The Reform seminary, Hebrew Union College, will become independent of the movement, freeing itself to raise funds more effectively. The Jewish Federation system will at some point be ready to breach the wall of separation that has for too long supported every Jewish communal institution *except* the synagogue.

Or maybe none of this will happen, and things will just plod along as they have since 1824, when a few Frankfort Jews wanted to hear organ music accompany the prayer service. For better or for worse, the Jews of tomorrow, who will probably not refer to themselves with any particular label except Jewish, will decide our future. And as scary as some of their choices may seem to Mr. Wertheimer (and to myself), I consider them preferable to the elitist fulminations of professionals in today's moribund movement world who pathetically sound the bugle for a cavalry that will never mount up for them.

RABBI MARC GELLMAN
Melville, New York

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Lewis Pyenson

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Vol. 260 - \$90.00 ISBN-13: 978-0-87169-260-3



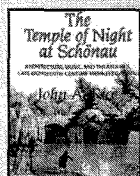
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Vincent Ilardi

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The Library of Benjamin Franklin

Edwin Wolf 2nd and Kevin J. Hayes

(Joint publication of the American Philosophical Society and the Library Company of Philadelphia)

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TRANSACTIONS OF THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY



The Making of a Romantic Icon: The Religious Context of Friedrich Overbeck's *Italia und Germania*

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Edward G. Longacre and Theodore J. Zeman, editors

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Estelle Haan

Vincent Bourne (1694-1747) was one of the most popular Latin poets of his day. His Latin verse appealed to early eighteenth-century and Romantic sensibilities. The present study examines a broad range of that Latin verse in its classical, neo-Latin, and vernacular contexts with particular attention to the theme of identity (and differing forms of identity). Appended to the study are the texts (with Haan's translations) of the Latin poetry discussed.

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TO THE EDITOR:

I appreciate Jack Wertheimer's fine explication of the state of Reform Judaism, but I must take exception to his statement that the movement's "leadership remains intensely attached to Israel." The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) may pay lip service in support of the Jewish state, but its record of advocacy tells a different story.

In 2004, the URJ criticized the U.S. Congress for "passing one-sided pro-Israel resolutions." The URJ leadership opposed the U.S. intervention in Iraq to depose Saddam Hussein, who was, among other things, paying bounties to the families of Palestinian terrorists who killed Israelis. Earlier this year, the URJ issued an ill-timed endorsement of the establishment of a Palestinian state. More recently, URJ president Rabbi Eric Yoffie declared that the movement would not cooperate with Christian Zionist friends of Israel.

MARK GOLD
Springfield, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

In his otherwise superb article on the present and future of Reform Judaism, Jack Wertheimer misses at least part of the point while discussing the renewed vibrancy of the movement in the 1970's and 80's. Crucial to the history of Reform was the decision in the 1960's by the leadership, faced for decades with empty pews, to undertake a "self-study" of the movement. For this the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC, today the Union for Reform Judaism) turned to Leonard Fein, then a scholar at Brandeis and MIT. In 1972, he pub-

lished his findings in a watershed volume, *Reform Is a Verb: Notes on Reform and Reforming Jews*.

Fein's conclusions were basic, and dramatic. In effect, his report declared: "Folks, you have empty pews because you have an empty religion." It did not take long for the movement's leadership to get the message; the return to synagogue ritual, use of Hebrew, innovative services, and an emphasis on text-study followed almost immediately and became hallmarks of a revived and newly-vibrant Reform. I would note parenthetically that an additional, exogenous factor in Reform's "renewal" was the increase in ethnic consciousness across American society—the "Roots" phenomenon—that characterized this period.

JEROME A. CHANES
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

JACK WERTHEIMER writes:

The letters submitted by five prominent Reform rabbis can be read as a fascinating mini-symposium on the limits of autonomy, the state of lay-rabbinic relations, and the nature of authority in the Reform movement.

Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie sets the record straight about a statement on religious choice and obligation that occasioned much discussion when it appeared in print a year ago. As he had not, to the best of my knowledge, ever before issued a public complaint about the "bastardized version" of these remarks, I assumed they reflected his current position. I am happy he has cleared this up.

But Rabbi Yoffie skirts the larger question I posed

in citing these remarks: has the Reform movement drawn any red lines to its left? Rabbi Clifford E. Librach's letter provides anecdotal evidence of demarcations to the right, which according to his testimony make for an intolerance of those Reform Jews who delve too deeply into traditional Judaism. Given that Reform has grown to become the largest of the Jewish religious movements, it has a responsibility to clarify not only which traditions it negates but which revisions of Judaism it rejects.

What complicates any such effort is the movement's insistence on reconciling the irreconcilable: autonomy and obligation. Several of my correspondents seem to agree that, as Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin puts it, "personal autonomy has become problematic," or, as Rabbi Leon Morris adds, "the language of personal choice is passé." Rabbi Salkin's letter indirectly offers at least two examples of how the movement's emphasis on autonomy is harmful. One relates to his defense of teaching together both Jews and non-Jews who "thirst for knowledge." If the purpose is to transmit the wisdom of Judaism in an academic fashion, I, too, see no problem. But the rabbi's teaching role is prescriptive as well as descriptive; Torah study is devotional as well as intellectual. In order to "create Jews," rabbis must explain that a *mitzvah* is a commandment that should be observed, not merely an interesting folkway that some Jews choose to observe. Such discourse is hard enough to come by in Reform settings, and doubly hard in the company of non-Jews who are not com-

manded to observe *mitzvot*.

A second example of the dilemma the movement has created for itself concerns Rabbi Salkin's assertion that "Reform Judaism does not condone intermarriage." But when hundreds of Reform rabbis officiate at intermarriages, how can anyone imagine the movement does not condone them? Moreover, as Rabbi Marc Gellman notes, the autonomy fetish has led to a situation in which some rabbis are coerced into officiating at intermarriages, often against their better religious judgment, because their congregants insist upon it and their movement does not draw a line. Rabbi Gellman may well be describing the reality on the ground when he says that "the intermarriage wars in Reform Judaism are effectively over."

Rabbis Librach, Morris, and Gellman raise important questions about the state of relations between Reform rabbis and their congregants. Rabbi Salkin argues on this score that I fail to credit Reform "for dealing with the Jewish world as it is, not as we might have hoped it would turn out." This too easily exonerates the movement of its missteps and discounts the power of leadership. My conception of the rabbinate is of men and women who are prepared to resist what they know to be wrong, even at the price of being out of step with the times.

A recent, posthumously published book of essays by the social critic Phillip Rieff, *The Crisis of the Officer Class*, argues that our cultural drift has come about from the top down rather than the bottom up. According to Rieff, the tradi-

Excerpted from

Vindicating Capitalism: The Real History of the Standard Oil Company

BY ALEX EPSTEIN

The standard story of Standard Oil has a standard lesson drawn from it: Rockefeller should never have been permitted to take the destructive, “anticompetitive” actions (rebates, “predatory pricing,” endless combinations) that made it possible for him to acquire and maintain his stranglehold on the market. The near-laissez-faire system of the 19th century accorded him too much economic freedom—the freedom to contract, to combine with other firms, to price, and to associate as he judged in his interest. Unchecked, economic freedom led to Standard’s large aggregation of economic power—the power flowing from advantageous contractual arrangements and vast economic resources that enabled it to destroy the economic freedom of its competitors and consumers. This power, we are told, was no different in essence than the political power of government to wield physical force in order to compel individuals against their will. In the free market, through unrestrained voluntary contracts and combinations, Standard had allegedly become the equivalent of a king or dictator with the unchallenged power to forbid competition and legislate prices at whim. “Standard Oil,” writes Ron Chernow, author of the popular Rockefeller biography *Titan*, “had taught the American public an important but paradoxical lesson: Free markets, if left completely to their own devices can wind up terribly unfree.”

This lesson was and is the logic behind antitrust law, in which government uses its political power to forcibly stop what it regards as “anticompetitive” uses of economic power. John Sherman, the author of America’s first federal antitrust law, the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, likely had Rockefeller in mind when he said:

If we will not endure a king as a political power we should not endure a king over the production, transportation, and sale of any of the necessities of life. If we would not submit to an emperor, we should not submit to an autocrat of trade, with power to prevent competition, and to fix the price of any commodity.

But Rockefeller was no autocrat. The standard lesson of Rockefeller’s rise is wrong—as is the traditional story of how it happened. Rockefeller did not achieve his success through the destructive, “anticompetitive” tactics attributed to him—nor could he have under economic freedom. Rockefeller had no coercive power to banish competition or to dictate consumer prices. His sole power was his earned *economic* power—which was no more and no less than his ability to refine crude oil to produce kerosene and other products better, cheaper, and in greater quantity than anyone thought possible.

It has been more than one hundred years since Ida Tarbell published her *History of the Standard Oil Company*. It is time for Americans to know the real history of that company and to learn its attendant and valuable lessons about capitalism. . . .

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tional guardians of society have stopped valuing culture and traditions, discipline and depth, and have abandoned the role of responsible guide for that of therapist. If our rabbis, too, bend to the demands of the Jewishly uninformed, how can we hope to reverse the tide of defection from Judaism?

In this connection, I strongly disagree with Rabbi Gellman's analysis of the Conservative movement. I have candidly written in these pages about the serious challenges facing that movement ("The Perplexities of Conservative Judaism," September 2007), but I would not characterize it as "dying." Nor would I attribute its weaknesses to defiance of "egalitarian wor-

ship, the ordination of women, and openness to intermarried families." In fact, the movement's decline set in two decades *after* it embraced the first two positions and continues even as it becomes ever more receptive to the third. The reason, in my judgment, is the same "crisis of the officer class" that afflicts Reform. When leaders cannot articulate what they stand for and why, members drift away.

One serious consequence of such drift, as Rabbi Salkin reminds us, has been the erosion of strong support for Israel among Reform Jews. But it must also be said that rhetoric within the movement has abetted the erosion. There are Reform rabbis who have been im-

balanced in castigating Israel for its policies toward the Palestinians or its failings on the issue of religious pluralism. Whatever criticisms there are to be made, the ties binding American Jews and Israel must remain indissoluble.

I emphasize this point because all five of my rabbinical correspondents are exemplars of passionate commitment to Israel and the Jewish people. One can only hope with Rabbi Morris that their personal model will help inspire a deepened conversation about obligation within their movement. On this score, I take exception to Mark Gold's indictment of Reform's record on Israel. I do not subscribe to the policy positions of the Union for Reform Judaism,

but many of them are shared by substantial portions of the Israeli populace. I remind Mr. Gold that the current Israeli government has officially endorsed a two-state solution.

I suppose I have missed the point Jerome A. Chanes would have me make. I see no evidence that the Reform movement began its synagogue revolution in response to Leonard Fein's 1972 study. I suspect the movement changed its approach for a variety of reasons—as a response to the Haverah movement of the 1970's that sought more hands-on, less formal worship; the formative experiences of new leaders once a year of study in Israel became a requirement for rabbinical and cantorial stu-

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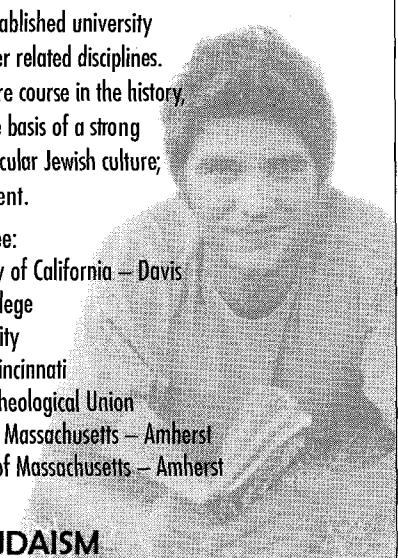
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which the expected value is infinity; something has to be wrong, but can you guess what it is?

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dents; and the spirit of musical and liturgical experimentation that has marked congregational life in America generally over the past few decades.

I am grateful to all of my correspondents for the seriousness and measured tone of their comments.

Israel's Founding

TO THE EDITOR:

Efraim Karsh makes selective use of evidence in order to argue that the Palestinian Arabs were not expelled by the nascent Jewish state ["1948, Israel, and the Palestinians—The True Story," May]. He makes no mention of the fact that some 50,000 Arab residents of Lydda and Ramle were forced from their homes and made to march on foot toward Arab battle lines in the east. Yitzhak Rabin, then a military commander, wrote in his memoirs that "there was no way of avoiding the use of force and warning shots in order to make the inhabitants march." After encountering the condition of these refugees in Ramallah, the UN diplomat Count Bernadotte wrote that he had never seen "a more ghastly sight."

By relying almost exclusively on biased Israeli sources, Mr. Karsh ignores the personal testimony—in the form of memoirs, letters, and works of history—by Palestinian victims of the Israeli expulsion. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, to cite just one example, has written heartbreakingly about the Palestinians who fled the coastal city of Jaffa in the spring of 1948. The Israelis, as he records, had con-

quered the Arab sections of Tel Aviv and were threatening an invasion of Jaffa's population centers. Meanwhile, word had come of the events at Deir Yasin, in which dozens of Arab civilians were murdered by Jewish militias like the Stern Gang and the Irgun.

Mr. Karsh also ignores third-party testimony, such as that of the distinguished Jewish intellectual Arthur Koestler, who wrote that the Israelis conducted "ruthless dynamiting of block after block" of Arab neighborhoods.

MARTIN HARRIS
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Efraim Karsh refers to the 1948 battle of Deir Yasin as an example of an "atrocious" that sparked revenge killings of Jews by Arabs. "Perceived atrocity" would be more accurate. Although Arab sources at the time claimed that Irgun forces had massacred hundreds of villagers, there is not a single impartial eyewitness account to substantiate that allegation. All parties agreed that there was bitter house-to-house fighting between Jewish and Arab forces.

Some officials of the Jewish Agency and Hagana in 1948 repeated the Arabs' accusations in order to smear their Irgun rivals, but Israel's Labor government refuted the allegation in 1969. That year, a pamphlet issued by the Foreign Ministry under Abba Eban called the massacre claim "a fairy-tale" and a "big lie." The pamphlet even pointed out that the "the Jewish Agency and the Hagana were in no position to 'admit' or 'contradict' anything, as their defense units did not take part in the

battle, nor could they have known at first hand of the circumstances in which civilian casualties had been caused."

ROBERT WEINTRAUB
New York City

Efraim Karsh writes:

Martin Harris charges me with selective use of evidence in relying on "biased Israeli sources" and ignoring the testimony of "Palestinian victims of the Israeli expulsion." But as the annotated version of my article on the COMMENTARY website makes eminently clear, the vast majority of my research involved Arab sources, ranging from captured documents to contemporary radio broadcasts and press dispatches to political and military memoirs to real-time intelligence reports based on raw information gleaned from a wide variety of Arab sources (e.g., agents and informants, phone tapping, conversations with Arab politicians and activities, etc.). It stretches credulity to label authentic minutes of Arab League debates, correspondence between Arab military commanders and political leaders, or the mufti's personal diary, to mention a few examples, as "biased Israeli sources" just because these documents are deposited in Israeli (and to a lesser extent in British and American) archives.

Nor is it clear why these first-hand accounts should carry less weight than Arthur Koestler's third-hand testimony. Koestler was not even in Palestine during the period covered in my article (November 30, 1947 to May 14, 1948), and his battlefield accounts were (as he put it) "pieced together" in the weeks following his ar-

rival on June 4, 1948 as he toured the country with other foreign correspondents, under official Israeli auspices, speaking mainly to Israeli Jews.

This should have made Koestler an accomplice to my putative sin of "relying almost exclusively on biased Israeli sources." But then it is doubtful that Mr. Harris has actually consulted Koestler's book on the saga of Israel's rebirth, *Promise and Fulfillment: Palestine 1917-1949*. If he had, he might have realized that in sharp contrast to the half-line quote cited in his letter (and apparently copied from an anti-Israel website), the book is hugely sympathetic to the Jewish national cause, laudatory of Jewish courage and fighting ethics, and scathing about Arab political and military conduct. Here is a salient passage:

Deir Yasin owes its notoriety to the fact that it was an exception; and at least the Jews committed no individual acts of sadism. . . . But elsewhere the corpses of Jews who had fallen into Arab hands were often found castrated and with their eyes gouged out. . . . [B]efore leaving Tel Aviv I had got hold of a collection of photographs which I had passed on to Alexis Ladas of the United Nations Commission. They showed grinning men in Arab uniform posing for the photographer with their bayonets plunged into stacked heaps of naked mutilated corpses, and the like. . . . I mention this subject with reluctance; to pass over it in silence would mean minimizing the bravery of Jews going out

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on lonely patrols or convoy escorts. For this sort of thing did not start with the war; from the days of the first Jewish settlements, when a Jew was found murdered on the road he had nearly always been mutilated.

Mr. Harris is on more solid ground in describing Arabs leaving Jaffa as fleeing—for there was no expulsion whatsoever from the city. But he is wrong to attribute their departure to a "Deir Yasin effect." True, the inflation of the tragedy—in which, as Robert Weintraub aptly notes, dozens of Arab villagers were killed in the course of a fierce battle—to a massacre of gigantic proportions spread panic within the disoriented Palestinian society and accelerated its flight. But the exodus from Jaffa, like that from other localities throughout Palestine, began well before Deir Yasin.

Flight from the city's border neighborhoods ensued within hours of the November 1947 resolution to partition Palestine, and hemorrhaged as fears of a violent backlash were vindicated. Affluent families left for other locales in Palestine or for countries like Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Cyprus. The poor were reduced to sleeping rough in the streets or squatting in deserted buildings. By the beginning of 1948, some 25,000 people—more than a third of the Arab population of Jaffa—had fled. By the time the Jewish Irgun forces began their offensive in the morning hours of April 25, in what inaugurated the final round in the battle for Jaffa, the city's 70,000-strong Arab community had dwindled to

about 20,000-30,000 residents. Within a fortnight the city had virtually emptied, despite a spirited attempt by some 4,500 British troops, supported by airplanes, tanks, armored cars, and field artillery, to shore up the situation.

"Really the Arabs are rabbits," Sir Henry Gurney, Chief Secretary to the Palestine Mandate Government and no friend of Zionism or Jews, recorded in his diary on May 5:

Ninety percent of the population of Jaffa have just run away, and only some 5,000 now remain. Yesterday the municipal engineer locked the door of the water-supply pumping station, and walked off. The [British] army have taken it on. The mayor has gone, without even saying goodbye, and the remnants of the [Arab irregular] Liberation Army are looting and robbing. This is what the Palestine Arabs get from the assistance provided by the Arab states.

Among the early escapees was Hisham Sharabi, later to become a well-known intellectual. In an autobiography published in 1978 he asked himself "how we could leave our country when a war was raging and the Jews were gearing themselves to devour Palestine." His bitter answer:

There were others to fight on my behalf; those who had fought in the 1936 revolt and who would do the fighting in the future. They were peasants... [whose] natural place was here, on this land. As for us—the educated ones—we were

on a different plane. We were struggling on the intellectual front.

The American-Palestinian academic Ibrahim Abu Lughod, then an eighteen-years-old high-school student in Jaffa, was no prouder of the circumstances of his own "desertion" (as he called it). "There was a Belgian ship," he recalled,

and one of the sailors, a young man, looked at us—and the ship was full of people from Jaffa, some of us were young adults—and he said: "Why don't you stay and fight?" I have never forgotten his face and I have never had one good answer for him.

The town of Lydda was a different case; there, in the heat of battle in July 1948, Arab residents were forced out by Israeli troops. (Contrary to Mr. Harris's claim, parroted from his anti-Israel website, there was no expulsion whatsoever from Ramle). In an earlier piece in COMMENTARY ("The Palestinians and the Right of Return," May 2001) I addressed the peculiar circumstances of the Lydda episode, but it lay outside the scope of my recent article, which focused on the five-and-a-half-month war preceding Israel's proclamation on May 14, 1948.

This period, commonly known as the "civil war" phase of the 1948 war, is often overshadowed by the latter, more dramatic phase that began with the concerted pan-Arab attack on the newly declared Jewish state. Yet it was during these earlier months that Palestinian Arab society disintegrated, with some 300,000-340,000

of its members taking to the road. The pan-Arab invasion did little to reconstitute this society, and instead triggered another wave of some 150,000-200,000 escapees. In any case, the Arab states were more interested in incorporating whatever parts of Palestine they could occupy than in establishing an independent Arab state in the territory.

I intend to examine the pan-Arab invasion and its implications for the Palestinian Arabs in a forthcoming study. Suffice it to say here that the similarities to the first phase are striking. Had the Palestinian Arab leaders and their counterparts in the neighboring Arab states accepted the UN partition resolution, Palestinian Arab society would not have collapsed and dispersed as it did. Had the Arab states opted for peace with Israel instead of attempting to destroy it at birth, the second wave of escapees would have been averted; an Arab state would have been established in part of Palestine; and those Arabs who fled during the civil war might have been able to return to their homes—whether in Israel or in the newly-established Arab state.

Above all, in neither stage of the war was there a Jewish design to dispossess the Palestinian Arabs. As I demonstrated in my article, most of them fled for the reasons commonly associated with war: fear, disorientation, economic privation. But to these must be added disillusionment with their own leadership, the role taken by that leadership in *forcing* widespread evacuations, and a lack of communal cohesion or the willingness to subordinate personal interests to the general good.



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Cultural Influence

TO THE EDITOR:

While admiring Terry Teachout's brilliant dissection of my book, *The Magical Chorus*, I feel compelled to add a few names to his

list of Russian artists of the 20th century who influenced American culture. Mr. Teachout rightly mentions the émigré poet Joseph Brodsky, who, while certainly not a household name (and which represen-

tative of a foreign-language highbrow culture is nowadays?), was a strong presence among New York literati. I would also make a case for the composer Alfred Schnittke, the most-recorded representative of

a postmodern classical music, and the filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky—witness Steven Soderbergh's affectionate 2002 remake of Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972).

SOLOMON VOLKOV
New York City

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How to Manage Savagery

Bret Stephens

“ISLAM HAS bloody borders.” So wrote Samuel Huntington in “The Clash of Civilizations?,” his 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article later expanded (minus the question mark) into a best-selling book. Huntington argued that, eclipsing past eras of national and ideological conflict, “the battle lines of the future” would be drawn along the “fault lines between civilizations.” Here, according to Huntington, was where current and coming generations would define the all-important “us” versus “them.”

At the time of its writing, “The Clash of Civilizations?” had, beyond the virtues of pithiness and historical sweep, something to recommend it on purely empirical grounds. It seemed especially plausible as applied to the “crescent-shaped Islamic bloc” from the Maghreb to the East Indies.

In the Balkans, for example, Orthodox Serbs were at the throats of Bosnian and later Kosovar Muslims. In Africa, Muslims were either skirmishing or at war with Christians in Nigeria, Sudan, and Ethiopia. In the Caucasus, there was all-out war between Orthodox Russia and Muslim Chechnya, all-out war between Christian Armenia and Muslim Azerbaijan, and violent skirmishes between Orthodox Ossetia and Muslim Ingushetia.

In the Middle East, some 500,000 U.S. troops

had intervened to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Israel had just endured several years of the first Palestinian *intifada*, soon to be followed by a fraudulent peace process leading, in turn, to a second and far bloodier *intifada*. Further to the east, Pakistan and India were at perpetual daggers drawn over Kashmir. There were tensions—sometimes violent—between the Hindu majority and the large Muslim minority in India, just as there were between the Christian minority and the Muslim majority in Indonesia.

For Huntington, all this was of a piece with a pattern dating at least as far back as the battle of Poitiers in 732, when Charles Martel turned back the advancing Umayyads and saved Europe for Christianity. Nor was the pattern likely to end any time soon. “The centuries-old military interaction between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline,” he wrote. To the contrary: “It could become more virulent.”

As predictions go, Huntington’s landmark thesis seemed in many ways to have been borne out by subsequent events. Long before 9/11, and long before George W. Bush came to office, anti-American hostility within the Muslim—and, particularly, the Arab—world was plainly on the rise. So was terrorist activity directed at U.S. targets. Meanwhile, the advent of satellite TV brought channels like al-Jazeera and Hizballah’s al-Manar to millions of Muslim homes and public places, offering their audience a robust diet of anti-American, anti-Is-

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rael, and often anti-Semitic “news,” propaganda, and Islamist indoctrination.

It should have come as no surprise, then, that Muslim reaction to the attacks of September 11, 2001 tended toward the euphoric—in striking confirmation, it would seem, of Huntington’s bold thesis. And that thesis would seem to be no less firmly established today, when opinion polls show America’s “favorability ratings” plummeting even in Muslim countries once relatively well-disposed toward us: in Turkey, for example, descending from 52 percent in 1999 to 12 percent in 2008, and in Indonesia from 75 percent to 37 percent in the same period (according to the Pew Global Survey). These findings are all the more depressing in light of the massive humanitarian assistance provided to Indonesia by the U.S. after the 2004 tsunami. The same might be said of Pakistan where, despite similarly critical U.S. assistance after the 2005 earthquake, already low opinions of the U.S. have sunk still further.

Nor is the phenomenon of “Muslim rage” directed against America alone. In Spain, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France and Germany—countries with widely varying foreign policies toward, and colonial histories in, the Muslim world—terrorist plots, terrorist attacks, spectacular murders, and mass rioting have made vivid the gulf that separates embittered and often radicalized Muslim minorities from the societies around them. Even in tiny, inoffensive Belgium, whose government was among the most vocal in opposing the war in Iraq and has bent over backward to respect the sensitivities of the Muslim community, the entire Brussels neighborhood of Molenbeek, according to the Flemish newspaper *Het Volk*, has been turned into a “breeding ground for thousands of jihad candidates.”

AND YET even as these trends unfolded, and continue to unfold, a second and almost opposite set of trends can be perceived today. Contrary to Huntington’s forecast, much of world conflict is now overwhelmingly characterized by fighting and competition not between or among civilizations but *within* them. And nowhere is this truer than in the Muslim world.

Look again at the peripheries of the Islamic crescent where Huntington perceived a collision course between Islam and the West. In the Balkans, NATO intervention in Bosnia and later in Kosovo secured Muslim populations and ultimately ended the Serbian regime of Slobodan Milosevic. In Africa, U.S. diplomatic mediation helped to bring an end to the 22-year second Sudanese civil war and to initiate de-

facto autonomy—with the ultimate goal of independence—for that country’s largely Christian south. In Israel, the second *intifada* with its wave of suicide bombings was all but stopped cold by a combination of aggressive counterinsurgency operations and the building of a separation fence.

In the Caucasus, the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan ended with a ceasefire that has held to this day, while Chechnya was brought to heel by a brutal military campaign directed by Russian President Vladimir Putin. In Kashmir, there has been no direct fighting between India and Pakistan; the head of the main jihadist group lamented this past July that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf had “murdered the Kashmir cause.” Even as far afield as Mindanao in the Philippines, the radical Islamist Abu Sayyaf movement has been crippled by a combination of Filipino and American arms.

True, not all the wars of the Islamic periphery have ended: Hamas’s Kassam rockets continue to fly from Gaza into Israel, and Hizballah, itself an Iranian proxy, has fully re-armed following the summer 2006 Lebanese war. In January 2007, Ethiopia invaded neighboring Somalia to depose a Taliban-like regime. Bombay was hit with a Madrid-style bombing attack on its commuter rails in 2006. Thailand’s Muslim minority has been restive and violent.

Remarkably, however, the wars that chiefly roil the Islamic world today are no longer at its periphery. They are at the center, and they pit Muslims against other Muslims. The genocide in Darfur is being perpetrated by a regime that is every bit as Muslim—and black—as its victims. The Palestinians went from *intifada* to civil war: in 2006 and 2007, nearly as many Palestinians died violently at the hands of other Palestinians as at the hands of Israelis. In Lebanon, there have been bloody clashes this year among Shiites, Sunnis, and Druze. Last year, the Lebanese government had to send troops into Palestinian refugee camps to suppress an insurrectionary attempt by a Syrian-sponsored terrorist group.

It does not end there. Saudi Arabia has been under attack by al Qaeda since 2003. In November 2005, Jordan suffered devastating suicide bombings at three Amman hotels in which nearly all the victims were, like their murderers, Sunni Muslims. In Afghanistan, a Muslim government led by Hamid Karzai—a Pashtun—fights an Islamist rebellion by Taliban remnants and their allies, also mostly Pashtun. In Pakistan, the axis of conflict has shifted from the east to the west, where sizable areas are under the control of Islamist militants; in 2007 alone, some 1,500 Pakistanis were killed in terror-

ist attacks, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto notably among them.

Then there is Iraq. Though Americans naturally focus on the more than 4,000 U.S. servicemen killed so far since the country was liberated in April 2003, that figure pales in comparison with the number of Iraqis killed in inter- and intra-sectarian violence: Sunnis against Shiites and Kurds, Sunnis against Sunnis, Shiites against Sunnis, Shiites against Shiites. Cumulatively, the number of civilian deaths since early 2006, when sectarian fighting got under way in earnest, now stands at just over 100,000 (according to the Brookings Institution).

All this serves as a useful reminder of another significant fact. In the years immediately prior to 9/11, non-Muslims tended to be the likeliest targets of terrorism. In recent years, Muslims themselves have overwhelmingly been their co-religionists' primary victims. In 2007, of the nearly 8,000 deaths due to terrorism in the Middle East, only a handful were Israeli. Similarly, of the roughly 270 suicide bombings in 2007, some 240 took place in predominantly Muslim countries. Nearly 100 mosques were also the targets of terrorist attack, many at the hands of Muslims.

TAKING THE long view, one might note that intra-Islamic feuding is as old as the religion itself. Of Muhammad's immediate successors—the "righteous caliphs," according to Sunni tradition—the first, Abu Bakr, may have been poisoned; the next three are all known to have been assassinated, with the murder of the third caliph (Othman) resulting in the schism from which the Shiite branch of Islam emerged. The Abassid revolt destroyed the Umayyad caliphate in the 8th century; the early 9th century was marked by civil war between the sons of the fifth Abassid caliph, Haroun al-Rashid. Al Qaeda itself has ancient Islamic antecedents: the 8th-century Kharajites, for instance, were notorious for their extreme puritanism, frequent recourse to violence, and the belief that they could declare their Muslim opponents to be infidels and treat them accordingly.

To be sure, endless feuding is hardly unique to Islamic civilization: the history of the West is also one of intense competition, bitter conflict, and outbursts of religious fanaticism. On the whole, though, these conflicts have dissipated and evanesced as the West has almost universally adopted democratic forms of governance. By contrast, Islam's foundational patterns not only persist into the present day but in many ways have intensified.

There have been devastating civil wars in Alge-

ria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen, and an even more terrible war between Iran and Iraq. Even a partial list of prominent political assassinations in the Muslim world since World War II runs to over 100 names. It includes two prime ministers and a president of Egypt; two presidents and a prime minister of Bangladesh; three prime ministers and a president of Iran; a king and two prime ministers of Jordan; two presidents, a president-elect, a prime minister, and a former prime minister of Lebanon; a president of Syria; a king and two prime ministers of Jordan; a king and a former prime minister of Iraq; a president, a prime minister, and former prime minister of Pakistan; a king of Saudi Arabia. And these are just the successful attempts. The list of coups in the Muslim world is about as long. In Syria alone there have been no fewer than nine since 1949.

Several explanations have been offered for this history of violence. There is the absence of democracy, which forecloses opportunities for non-violent political change and pushes most forms of dissent into the mosque. There is the oil curse, which allows states like Saddam Hussein's Iraq to finance expensive wars, buy political support, sustain huge sclerotic bureaucracies, and prevent the diversification and modernization of their economies. There is the endemic tribalism of Muslim, and particularly Arab, societies, and the values that go with it: the claims of kinship, the premium on familial honor, the submission to established hierarchies, suspicion of those outside the clan. There is the moral abdication of the Muslim intellectual class, which, with some notable exceptions, fell prey to nearly every bad idea that came its way, from fascism to socialism to third-worldism. And there is the history of Islam itself, which has made a virtue of military conquest, dealt sharply with heretics, and, until the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 by Turkey's Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, typically combined political with religious authority.

There is also the fact that European colonial regimes overstayed their welcome in their Middle Eastern possessions, with the effect that more or less liberal movements like the Egyptian Wafd came to be seen as stooges of the West, incapable of achieving national goals through nonviolent means. Partly as a result of this failure, the Muslim world soured on liberalism before it ever really tasted it, and traditional liberal parties and policies were discredited in favor of more radical alternatives: the Muslim Brotherhood, the violent Arab nationalisms of the Baath parties in Syria and Iraq, Gamal Abdel Nasser and the "Free Officers" in Egypt, Algeria's

National Liberation Front, and so on. Despite the manifest failings of these movements, and the triumph of liberal politics from Mexico City to Warsaw to Seoul, liberalism has never really recaptured its good name in the Muslim world beyond a handful of courageous individuals.

Exactly how to weigh the relative importance of these factors is hard to say; plainly they are mutually reinforcing. And while Muslim and especially Arab societies are not alone in suffering from them, they have come together in a unique way in those societies to produce a culture of perpetual failure and worsening crisis.

SHOULD THIS have been more apparent to Huntington when he wrote "The Clash of Civilizations?" Perhaps. It may have been obscured, in part, by what later turned out to be the Muslim world's own version of a holiday from history. The Iran-Iraq war ended in 1988, and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in the following year seemed to cool Iran's revolutionary ardor. Civil wars in Lebanon and Yemen were brought to an end, leaving most existing Arab regimes as entrenched as ever. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant the Middle East was no longer a cold-war battleground. Socialism lost favor, and some Middle Eastern regimes began expressing an interest in reforming their economies. From the outside, at least, one could almost begin imagining a "New Middle East," as Israel's Shimon Peres did with consummate naiveté in a 1993 book.

But the Soviet (and Yugoslav) collapse had another important consequence: it reshaped the map of the Muslim world by bringing newly independent post-Soviet states into its fold. Some independence movements, notably in Chechnya and Bosnia, took on an Islamic coloration. Elsewhere, a pan-Islamic consciousness, which had already gained considerable momentum with the 1979 Iranian revolution and the *mujabideen* war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, was spreading rapidly. It was aided immeasurably by advances in mass communication and by the worldwide establishment of thousands of Saudi-funded *madrassas* preaching an inflexible version of desert Islam. If, previously, the very idea of an "Islamic civilization" would have seemed at most a remote abstraction to most Muslims living within it, in the 90's it became at least possible to imagine this as an expression not only of common religious identity but also of shared political aspirations.

Most deeply invested in the concept were the Islamist radicals for whom the abolition of the caliphate represented not the passing of an outdat-

ed institution but a historical calamity. To them, the 90's presented its own set of opportunities. Unable to dislodge the "apostate regimes" of the Middle East through terrorist campaigns, they decided to focus on dislodging their patron—the United States—from the region.

The idea of killing large numbers of Westerners, particularly Americans, had the additional advantage of being both plausible and popular. Plausible, because the Reagan administration's precipitous withdrawal from Beirut after the 1983 bombings of our Marine barracks and embassy, followed a decade later by the Clinton administration's equally precipitous withdrawal from Somalia, suggested a superpower easily frightened. And popular because the U.S. really was broadly detested throughout the Muslim world, not least on account of its support for the selfsame apostate regimes that were detested by the radicals.

The strategy of an "escalating sequence" of terrorist attacks on American targets was explicitly laid out by the jihadist theoretician Abu Bakr Naji (the name is almost certainly a pseudonym) in a document, *The Management of Savagery*, published on the Internet in 2004. Predicated on the idea that everyone loves a winner, it was not, in its own terms, a bad strategy.

In the immediate wake of the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration and other governments had been quick to brand Osama bin Laden as an outcast among Muslims. But the overwhelming weight of evidence suggested differently. There were large public demonstrations of support for bin Laden in the Philippines and Indonesia. In the Muslim areas of Thailand, the name "Osama" became suddenly popular among newborn boys *and* girls, according to an October 2001 report in the *Hindustan Times*. Portraits of bin Laden were hot-selling items from Bangladesh to Nigeria. A poll found that fully 42 percent of Kuwaitis, whose country the U.S. had liberated only a decade earlier, considered bin Laden a "freedom fighter." Among Palestinians, 9/11 made bin Laden "the most popular figure in the West Bank and Gaza, second only to Arafat," according to a Fatah leader in Nablus.

Al Qaeda's popularity would not soon fade. In 2004, the Pew Global Survey found 55 percent of Jordanians and 65 percent of Pakistanis holding a favorable view of bin Laden. Nor was al Qaeda slow to capitalize on its stardom. By 2002, European intelligence agencies were reporting a sharp uptick in the organization's recruitment efforts. More worrisomely, al Qaeda was able to transform itself from a group into a movement. Some jihadist

outfits, like Abu Musab al Zarqawi's Tawhid wal Jihad and the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, swore loyalty oaths directly to bin Laden. Others, including Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyah, began imitating al Qaeda's methods by attacking prominent Western targets. Cells sprang up in Gaza. Al-Qaeda "wannabes" murdered 52 people in the London bombings of July 2005 and plotted to murder the prime minister of Canada.

But it was the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq that, as Naji wrote in *The Management of Savagery*, had the most galvanizing effect on would-be jihadists. Even before the U.S. toppled the Taliban, the radical televangelist Sheik Yussuf al-Qaradawi had decreed: "Islamic law says that if a Muslim country is attacked, the other Muslim countries must help it, with their souls and their money, until it is liberated." His call was widely heeded. By late 2006, al Qaeda could count on as many as 5,000 to 10,000 active members in Iraq, many of whom (including nearly all the senior leadership) had come from abroad. And while they were never the major part of the Sunni insurgency that gripped the country until last year, they accounted for an estimated 90 percent of all suicide bombings.

Late 2006 was also the moment when it became at least conceivable that Naji's strategy, which foresaw the creation of "liberated zones" under the dominion of al-Qaeda-like groups, might actually succeed on the ground. Al Qaeda in Iraq had largely "liberated" Anbar province through an unbridled campaign of terror against other Sunnis. It had also pursued a policy of deliberate carnage against Iraq's Shiites, with the intent, and effect, of creating all-but ungovernable chaos in the country. In the United States, the report of the Iraq Study Group, headed by James Baker and Lee Hamilton, recommended that no more U.S. troops be committed to Iraq, while the Democratic party, which had largely supported the initial decision to invade Iraq, began issuing increasingly hectic calls for immediate withdrawal.

Had those calls become U.S. policy, Naji's strategy might have been vindicated. The "fall of prestige of America" that he prognosticated would have accelerated dramatically throughout the Muslim world. Precipitous U.S. withdrawal from Iraq would have been seen by jihadists and their fellow travelers in a similar light to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988—as proof that it was possible to defeat a superpower, and as a harbinger of their enemies' complete rout. Al Qaeda would have had every incentive to apply the Iraq model—the "management of savagery"—to other Muslim

states, particularly weaker secular states like Jordan, deemed guilty of "apostasy." And al Qaeda's own prestige would have been hugely boosted, offering a large pool of new recruits to replenish those who had been lost.

THAT, HOWEVER, is not how matters have turned out, at least so far. President Bush pushed ahead with his "surge" strategy, under a new commanding officer using tried and true counterinsurgency tactics. Its effects were soon felt. Al Qaeda's ranks were decimated, and the flow of foreign fighters dried up.

In late 2007, the U.S. military captured letters from two of al Qaeda's "emirs" in Iraq. One of them appraised his situation thus:

There were almost 600 fighters in our sector before the [Sunni] tribes changed course 360 [sic] degrees. . . . Many of our fighters quit and some of them joined the deserters. . . . As a result of that the number of fighters dropped down to 20 or less. We were mistreated, cheated, and betrayed by some of our brothers who used to be part of the jihadi movement, therefore we must not have mercy on those traitors until they come back to the right side or get eliminated completely.

The second emir offered similar testimony:

The Islamic State of Iraq [al Qaeda] is faced with an extraordinary crisis, especially in al-Anbar province. Al Qaeda's expulsion from Anbar created weakness and psychological defeat. This also created panic, fear, and the unwillingness to fight.

Nor was it only in Iraq that al Qaeda found itself on the run. In summer 2007, a National Intelligence Estimate warned that the terrorist group was once again in a position to strike the U.S. Yet less than a year later, CIA Director Michael Hayden offered a strikingly different assessment to the *Washington Post*. "On balance, we're doing pretty well," he said. "Near-strategic defeat of al Qaeda in Iraq. Near-strategic defeat for al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. Significant setbacks for al Qaeda globally . . . as a lot of the Islamic world pushes back on [its] form of Islam." Polls found declining levels of support for al Qaeda and other Islamist groups in several places in the Muslim world; in Pakistan, Islamist parties were trounced in February's parliamentary elections. Key al-Qaeda leaders were also killed in Predator strikes in the Pakistani hinterland bordering Afghanistan.

In short, al Qaeda's star has dimmed consider-

ably, and it is important to consider the reasons why. Though there can be little question that the surge accounts for a large part of the explanation, it is equally true that the surge would not have succeeded without the support of the very Sunnis who, until 2007, had provided sanctuary and support to men like Zarqawi and his minions. This switch is in turn explained by al Qaeda's barbaric treatment of ordinary Sunnis and their tribal leaders during the period of the "Anbar caliphate."

And that raises a question: why did al Qaeda put itself "in a state of war with the masses in the region" (in Naji's words) rather than using those masses as allies or pawns in their war against America and the so-called apostate governments? The answer, it turns out, is inscribed in the very nature of the jihadist movement.

"ALL EXISTING so-called Muslim societies are also Jahili societies," wrote Sayyid Qutb, al Qaeda's intellectual godfather, in his 1964 book *Milestones*. By "Jahili societies," Qutb was referring to the pre-Islamic, pagan world of Arabia that lived in "ignorance of divine guidance." Put simply, Qutb, his fellow travelers, and his spiritual heirs were, and are, not merely at war with the modern world, as defined by liberal democratic government and Western social mores. They are also murderously inclined toward "heretical Muslims," particularly Shiites. They object violently to Muslim attempts to fashion a kind of compromise modernity between Western and Islamic norms. They seek to overthrow secular Muslim regimes like Indonesia and Jordan, and religious Muslim regimes like Saudi Arabia that maintain relations with the West.

They are also—crucially—at war with the pre-modern world: traditional tribal societies in which authority is handed down from father to son and in which Islam is a religion and not a binding legal code or political ideology. Typically, Muslim regimes have been careful to accommodate their tribes, plying them with money, government jobs, small arms, and other tokens of honor, and above all by allowing them to govern their internal affairs. This was (generally) true even in Saddam's Iraq. To the jihadists, however, tribal structures represent a twofold political challenge: first, they instill a powerful sense of local identity as opposed to a strictly pan-Islamic one; second, their systems of patronage and charity get in the way of the jihadists' agenda of radical social change.

It was this anti-tribalist attitude, combined with the utter savagery with which the jihadists put it

into practice, that proved to be al Qaeda's undoing in Iraq. And that was not the only manner of its undoing. Precisely because of the post-9/11 transformation from a group to a movement, al Qaeda's leadership lost control of what in the West would be called message discipline.

"I repeat the warning against separating from the masses, whatever the danger," wrote Ayman al-Zawahiri to Zarqawi in an intercepted 2005 letter, stressing the need to avoid killing other Muslims, including Shiites. Zarqawi ignored the advice. The mass killings of fellow Muslims reversed the popular support previously garnered through attacks on Western targets. Worse, al Qaeda picked fights with countries that might have otherwise looked the other way at its activities. As late as early 2002, for example, Saudi Arabia's interior minister, Prince Nayef, was flatly denying that al Qaeda even existed in his country. Four years later, after spectacular al-Qaeda attacks on the kingdom, the same prince was threatening to "cut off the tongues" of bin Laden and Zawahiri.

Most significantly, al Qaeda's failures and reversals began to sow deeper doubts about its basic purposes. The breakthrough came with the publication of *The Document of Right Guidance for Jihad Activity in Egypt and the World*, a systematic refutation of al Qaeda's theology and methods by Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, a/k/a "Dr. Fadl." The importance of this work derived from the standing of its author. Dr. Fadl was the first "emir" of Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the author of the 1988 *Foundations for the Preparation of Holy War*, a bible among jihadists.

There are various theories as to why Dr. Fadl—now imprisoned in Egypt—wrote the book; these range from a long and bitter personal feud with Zawahiri to coercion by the Egyptian government to a genuine ideological *volte face*. Whatever the case, its chief significance lies in its insistence that jihadist activities must be subordinate to ordinary moral considerations. The jihadi, Dr. Fadl writes, cannot steal for the sake of jihad, or murder Muslim civilians, religious minorities, or foreign tourists, or seek the overthrow of existing Muslim governments, or cavalierly decree the apostasy of others, or disobey his parents. ("We find parents," Dr. Fadl states severely, "who only learn that their son has gone to fight jihad after his picture is published in the newspaper as a fatality or a prisoner.")

Even now, after his "conversion," Dr. Fadl is no one's idea of a modern secular thinker. Rather, his manifesto rejects the inherent radicalism of jihadism in favor of more orthodox conservative val-

ues, a return to a kind of Islamic mean. More than that, it is a frank recognition of reality—namely, that the jihadist fervor of men like Zawahiri can only lead Muslims down one dead-end street after another.

HOW WIDESPREAD is this recognition? That remains to be seen, as do its consequences. As Max Boot has noted in COMMENTARY,* it takes neither a large organization nor particularly deep pockets to perpetrate devastating terrorist attacks, and terrorist groups have shown considerable resilience even in the face of the most devastating setbacks. Furthermore, although al Qaeda may have been gravely wounded in the past year, Hizballah has grown considerably stronger and more confident. The Bush administration kept its nerve in Iraq, and may finally have won the war. But it seems to have lost its nerve vis-à-vis Iran's quest to become a nuclear power. Israel defeated Yasir Arafat's second *intifada*, but it may soon be beset by a third one, this time planned and instigated by Hamas.

Still, al Qaeda's decline offers a kind of portrait-in-miniature of a civilization that seems perpetually to be collapsing in on itself. Here is a movement in which suicide—that is, self-destruction—is treated as the ultimate act of self-assertion. A movement that sees itself as an Islamic vanguard, leading the way toward a genuine Muslim *umma*, but is permanently at war with the Muslim communities it inhabits. A movement whose attacks beyond the Islamic world have mainly had the effect of accelerating the very forces by which it is sealing its own fate. To use an inexact astronomical analogy, this is a movement with the quality of a supernova: even as an envelope of superheated gas rapidly expands outward, its core is compressing and ultimately implodes.

A similar pattern played out with the pan-Arabist regimes of the 1950's and 60's. And the same forces are at work today in Iran, where the regime's outward-directed, "revolutionary" activities—from supporting Hamas to engineering Hizballah's de-facto takeover of Lebanon to developing nuclear weapons—seem almost purposely designed to counterbalance the weight of the regime's manifold domestic discontents.

As for how the United States and its allies should attempt to deal with this new reality, one temptation is simply to stay away, on the theory that no good can come from putting our hands in such a mess. This is roughly the view of the libertarian and paleoconservative Right, and perhaps a major-

ity of the Left. But the view hardly bears discussion: all mention of Israel aside, access to Middle Eastern energy resources is a vital American interest and will almost certainly remain so for decades. The Muslim world is also inextricably a part of the Western one, particularly in Europe. Nor is the global terrorist threat likely to go away even if al Qaeda does. The possibility that a regime that sponsors or supports terrorists might be in a position to supply them with weapons of mass destruction is a direct threat to us.

A second option, associated with the so-called realist school, contends that with rare exceptions, the U.S. should deal with the Muslim world more or less as it is, without seeking to change it.† This is a view that has much to recommend it—at least in the hands of a master diplomatic practitioner. But Metternichs are hard to come by, and in the hands of lesser statesmen, realism easily slides into passive acquiescence in an intolerable status quo—or into intolerable changes to it. Witness the readiness of Colin Powell, as chairman of the joint chiefs of staff during the first Bush administration, to accept Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 as a *fait accompli*.

A third view, shared to varying degrees by neo-conservatives and liberal internationalists, is that the U.S. and the West have no choice but actively to seek domestic reforms in Muslim countries. Needless to say, such a course is fraught with risks and often prone to mishandling, overreaching, and failure. But some version of it is the only approach that can, if not heal the pathologies of the Muslim world, then at least ameliorate and contain them so that they do not end up arriving unbidden on our doorstep, as they did one morning in September 2001.

This is not the place to lay out precisely how the U.S. might go about pursuing such a course with greater success than it has achieved thus far. But a few points are worth noting in light of the experience detailed above:

- First, while we should pursue democratic (and economic) openings wherever we realistically can do so, our overarching and primary aim is to make the Muslim world unsafe for radicalism—whether that radicalism is of the Islamist, pan-Arabist, or Baathist variety. This means a policy of unyielding opposition to groups like Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood and to the Iranian and Syrian regimes, despite growing calls to come to terms with all of them. But we must also come to

* "Are We Winning the War on Terror?," July-August 2008.

† I dealt at length with this school of thought in "Realists to the Rescue?," COMMENTARY, February 2007.

terms with the *limits* of what intervention in Muslim politics can plausibly achieve. In particular, we need to be attentive to the fact that Western-style political or social prescriptions can often be counterproductive.*

- Second, the experience of the so-called Anbar Awakening of tribal leaders against al Qaeda is an instructive reminder that the Muslim world does not, as was widely asserted in the wake of September 11, divide merely between a handful of extremists and a “vast majority” of moderates who can easily be rallied to our side. Instead, Muslim societies typically divide into at least three significant blocs: a “pre-modern” element, consisting mainly of tribesmen, peasants, nomads, and the like; a “modern” element, typically urban, educated, and, by the standards of their societies, middle-class; and an “anti-modern” element, consisting mostly of Islamists but also of members of the Baath party and other fascistic groups.

So far, many of our democracy-promotion efforts have been aimed at the middle group, the one most familiar to us. But this is not, in all cases, politically the most consequential element. What we have learned in Iraq is that it is possible, indeed necessary, to isolate anti-moderns by creating political alliances between the urban middle class and the tribes.

- Third, we can seek ways to cultivate nationalist sentiment in the Muslim world, not least because jihadists detest, and fear, the notion of Arab and Muslim nationalism as yet another locus of loyalty that has nothing to do with Islam. In hindsight, Iraq’s near-miraculous soccer victory in last year’s Asian Cup was a significant moment in its evolution as a post-Baathist state, confirming that there really is such a thing as an Iraqi nationalism shared by Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds alike.

- Finally, although the internal factors that ultimately did so much to cripple al Qaeda were, so to speak, written into its very DNA, they were not triggered until the United States proved itself capable

of defeating the bin Laden gang militarily—first incompletely in Afghanistan, later decisively in Iraq. The importance of these confrontations lay not only in the actual killing or capture of al Qaeda’s leadership and its foot soldiers but also in the demonstration to a watching Muslim world of the full extent of American power and the comparative weakness of al Qaeda. Its defeat finally pricked the Muslim myth that the jihadists were a military match for the U.S., just as Israel’s victory in the Six-Day war of 1967 made a mockery of the martial pretensions of pan-Arabism and dealt Nasser a near-fatal blow.

Now the government of neighboring Iran has invested some \$20 billion of scarce national treasure, and the weight of the regime’s prestige, in its nuclear programs. Aside from the inherent case for getting rid of these programs for the threat they pose to core U.S. interests, it ought at least to be considered that their swift destruction might, far from rallying Iranians to their leaders’ side, produce precisely the opposite effect.

These suggestions are only a sketch of a policy. But effective policy depends above all on a correct understanding of the people, places, and things toward which it is being applied. To speak of an Islamic civilization is to speak in error. Rather, there is a Muslim world. It is fractured, and fractious. At times, Muslim causes or conflicts spill over into the non-Islamic world, as they did in the 1990’s. Today, thanks in no small part to our actions, they remain internal—expression not, or not merely, of a clash of civilizations, but of the convulsion of one. In this internal disunity lie our strength and our opportunity—and ultimately, perhaps, the reform of the Muslim world itself.

* In Morocco, for example, the king, not parliament, appoints and oversees the minister of religious affairs. He, in turn, is solely responsible for approving religious rulings, weighing their compatibility with *sharia* in much the same way the Congressional Budget Office assesses the fiscal impact of a tax cut. The result is a religious environment that is at once more tightly controlled and more progressive in its attitudes toward family law, women’s rights, and so on.

Obama's "Talking" Cure

Joshua Muravchik

IN THE never-ending torrent of attacks on the Bush administration's conduct of American foreign policy, the President's supposed neglect of the peaceful instruments of diplomacy has come in for especially pointed criticism. Bush has been faulted, for example, for his unwillingness to talk directly with Iran and to negotiate one-on-one with North Korea, for his crude attempts to "isolate" Syria, and for his failure to immerse himself in the Israel-Palestinian peace process. The general line was encapsulated by the television news star Anderson Cooper last year in a leading question to Barack Obama:

In the spirit of . . . bold leadership would you be willing to meet . . . during the first year of your administration . . . with the leaders of Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korea, in order to bridge the gap that divides our countries?

Obama did not hesitate. "I would," he replied. "And the reason is . . . that the notion that somehow not talking to countries is punishment to them—which has been the guiding diplomatic principle of this administration—is ridiculous."

As is his wont, Obama later offered up a number

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of qualifications and clarifications of this statement. Electoral maneuvering aside, however, he stuck to his main position, which he seemed to treat as so obviously true as to be irrefutable. But is it? How valuable *is* diplomacy? Can it in fact "bridge the gap" with enemies by disclosing unsuspected common ground and thereby changing the equation between them and us? Has it ever done so?

THE MOST frequently cited example of the power of transformative diplomacy is Richard Nixon's trip to China in 1972. Yet, for all the stirring drama of the event, Nixon's visit was itself made possible only by a preceding momentous development—namely, a radical turn in China's perception of its own situation vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. As Henry Kissinger would put it, "Only extraordinary concern about Soviet purposes"—and about the large buildup of Soviet forces on the Chinese border—"could explain the Chinese wish to sit down with the nation heretofore vilified as the archenemy." In addition, according to the Sinologist Jonathan Spence, Chinese leaders were desperate to expand domestic oil production, a task for which they had "neither the resources nor the technology." There thus ensued, over a period of years, an exchange of hints, signals, and messages through third parties, leading first to secret talks between Kissinger and the Chinese leaders and finally to Nixon's visit.

Of that visit, Kissinger would write:

I know of no presidential trip that was as carefully planned. . . . The voluminous briefing books . . . contained essays on the trip's primary objectives and on all subjects of the agenda previously established. . . . They suggested what the Chinese position would be on each topic, and the talking points the President might follow. . . . Nixon . . . committed the talking points to memory and followed them meticulously in his meetings with Chou En-Lai.

The responses from Chou and Mao were no less scripted.

The visit to China, in other words, consecrated but did not cause a change in course by the two nations; it was a culmination of new thinking, not a catalyst of or occasion for it. And something analogous may be said of the other famous peacemaking summit of recent decades, namely, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's groundbreaking trip to Jerusalem in 1977.

Notwithstanding the surprise attack he launched on Israel in October 1973, Sadat had led Egypt away from the bankrupt "revolution" of his predecessor Gamal Abdel Nasser, including by expelling Soviet military forces and turning Egypt toward the West. In July 1977, in an interview on ABC TV, the Egyptian president signaled his intention to end the conflict with Israel. He reiterated the point in a speech to the Egyptian People's Assembly in November: "I state in all seriousness that I am prepared to go to the end of the world—and Israel will be surprised to hear me tell you that I am ready to go to their home, to the Knesset itself." Two days later, Prime Minister Menachem Begin responded in a televised speech addressed to the Egyptian public, saying that "it will be a pleasure to welcome and receive your president with the traditional hospitality you and we have inherited from our common father, Abraham." Eight days later, Sadat arrived.

Long and tortuous negotiations, mediated by Jimmy Carter, lay ahead before this breakthrough would result in a peace treaty. If the visit itself constituted a watershed, this was due not to any of the words that passed between Egyptian and Israeli leaders but to the fact that Sadat, as a result of much thought and calculation of Egypt's self-interest, had decided to address at long last the crux of the conflict: the refusal of the Arabs to recognize the existence of Israel. For him as for Chou and Mao, meeting his opposite numbers face to face was the *result*, not the *cause*, of the change in direction, with summitry serving as a confirming ritual.

Numerous other reversals and re-positionings

have taken place without or in spite of extraordinary bouts of diplomacy. One of them was the ending of the cold war—the most monumental shift in modern times. Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet General Secretary in 1985 and met President Ronald Reagan later that year. They met again in 1986 and 1987 and twice in 1988, and Gorbachev met President George H.W. Bush in 1989. But neither in Gorbachev's own accounts nor in those of outside observers can one find any evidence that these tête-à-têtes exercised a significant influence on his intellectual evolution—which was the real motive force behind the transformation and eventual abolition of the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev has described that inner journey as being driven by the wish to modernize and revitalize the country he ruled. By his third year in office he was ready to confess that the system gave him a "troubled conscience," to speak positively of "pluralism," and to exhort the Central Committee that "we need democracy like air." The liquidation of the cold war was a by-product of his encounters with Soviet reality, not with American presidents.

IT is actually difficult to think of any case where diplomacy has served to "bridge the gap" with a hostile or enemy nation. Which is hardly to say that such diplomacy has not been tried. Time and time again, American and other Western statesmen have undertaken strenuous diplomatic efforts at the highest levels in order to reach and change the minds of enemy leaders. As the history of cold-war summitry attests, the results have been at best trivial, at worst deleterious.

After World War II, the first conclave of Soviet with American (and British and French) heads of state was held in Geneva in July 1955, soon after the emergence of Nikita Khrushchev as General Secretary. The press enthused over "the spirit of Geneva," but Charles Bohlen, then America's ambassador to Moscow, called the outcome "disappointing and discouraging." Within a year, Soviet tanks suppressed the Hungarian revolution and Khrushchev was threatening London and Paris with nuclear attack over the issue of Suez.

The first bilateral U.S.-Soviet summit took place in 1959 in the course of a visit by Khrushchev to the United States. His private conversations with President Dwight D. Eisenhower at Camp David were marked by cordiality and gave rise to talk of a "spirit of Camp David." But in substance, as the Kremlinologist Adam Ulam noted, "the visit produced nothing beyond the predictable agreement to hold [another] summit meeting" of the Big Four. At the

opening of that session, in May 1960, Khrushchev demanded an apology for the overflight of a U-2 spy plane that the Soviets had just downed. Ike refused, and the meeting ended before it began.

Summitry resumed in Vienna soon after the inauguration of John F. Kennedy. This time, it was the turn of the Soviet press to hail "the spirit of Vienna." But to Bohlen, who was present as an adviser to the new President,

The results of the discussions were meager. . . .

The Soviet leader assured Kennedy that the Soviet Union would resume nuclear testing only if another country did first. He must have lied, because in August the Soviet Union began a two-month series of blasts, ending with the detonation of the most powerful explosion ever set off.

The unhappy aftermath did not stop there. In his memoirs, Khrushchev wrote that he came away "generally pleased" at finding JFK to be "interested in . . . avoiding conflict with the Soviet Union." So pleased, evidently, that two months later the Communists laid down barbed wire and began to erect the Berlin Wall.

Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, met Khrushchev's successor (or co-successor) Alexei Kosygin in 1967 in Glassboro, New Jersey; like clockwork, the American media invoked "the spirit of Glassboro." So empty was this particular diplomatic exercise that no communiqué was issued at its conclusion. The following year, Warsaw Pact forces crushed Czechoslovakia's "Prague Spring" and the Communists mounted their Tet offensive in Vietnam.

Far more ambitious talks were undertaken by President Nixon, aided by Henry Kissinger as his National Security Adviser. Nixon's interlocutor was Leonid Brezhnev, who had elbowed aside Kosygin as the Kremlin's top man, and the talks culminated in a 1972 Moscow summit that saw the signing of a Declaration of Basic Principles and the SALT I and other agreements. American critics, led by Senator Henry M. Jackson, protested that SALT I allowed the USSR an advantage in intercontinental missiles. Defenders argued that the importance of the agreement lay not in its impact on the two nations' respective arsenals but rather in its symbolic function as a cornerstone of détente—one element, in Kissinger's words, "of a larger decision to place relations on a new foundation of restraint, cooperation, and steadily evolving confidence."

These high hopes were dashed a year later by the Soviet role in arming Egypt and Syria for their surprise attack on Israel in the Yom Kippur war

and subsequent threat to intervene directly in the fighting. Over the next years, so great a mockery did the Kremlin make of the declaration that Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, forbade any further use of the term "détente."

Jimmy Carter, for his part, renewed the pursuit of détente on terms even more conciliatory and self-effacing than those struck by Kissinger. In 1979, having stood by as a handful of countries in Africa and the Americas fell to Communism, Carter at last reached his holy grail, a new SALT agreement signed at a summit meeting at which the President eagerly hugged and kissed a visibly nonplussed Brezhnev. A few months later, Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan, and the U.S. Senate shelved the pact.

IF 35 YEARS of U.S.-Soviet summitry were barren of positive results, the outcomes of other high-level talks with Communist regimes were outright damaging. In 1973, Kissinger and North Vietnam's negotiator Le Duc Tho shared the Nobel Peace Prize for an agreement committing both countries to withdraw their troops from South Vietnam. The Americans kept their side of the bargain; the North Vietnamese ignored theirs. In further violation, Hanoi launched an all-out offensive that completed its conquest of the south. Kissinger complained bitterly when Congress cut off support to the Saigon government—which, he said, would otherwise "not have collapsed in 1975." He may well have been right, but this hardly redeemed the wisdom of the deal negotiated with the Communists.

Similarly with the "agreed framework" between the Clinton administration and North Korea in 1994. This was engineered by ex-President Carter, still sublimely confident of his diplomatic talents despite the dismal record of his own administration. Carter undertook a pilgrimage to North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung that eventuated in a fraudulent structure of disarmament behind which Pyongyang sped its development of nuclear weapons.

To appreciate the persistence of this drearily repetitive pattern, one is inevitably pushed back to earlier but still-emblematic efforts of Western leaders to talk with their enemies. In World War II, the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin was not an enemy but an ally. Some in Washington and London vaguely foresaw the possibility of future conflict with the USSR—a conflict that Stalin on his side took as axiomatic. In hopes of securing the continued cooperation of Moscow following the war, both Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill placed great store in their personal contacts with Stalin. After vis-

iting the Soviet leader in Moscow in 1942, Churchill informed FDR: "I feel I have established a personal relationship that will be helpful." In April 1943, the American ambassador in Moscow conveyed FDR's wish to "sit down with Stalin and talk over problems" so as to avoid any "lack of understanding." As the President wrote Churchill, "I think I can handle Stalin better than either your foreign office or my State Department. . . . He thinks he likes me better, and I intend to keep it that way."

Stalin played on these illusions like a drum, maneuvering for Western assent to postwar Soviet rule over Eastern Europe while answering every appeal for moderation by referring to supposed hardliners in the Kremlin who were making it "impossible for me to fulfill your wish." Stalin likewise ran circles around FDR when it came to the latter's pet project of creating a structure through which the wartime allies would work together to uphold the postwar peace. He declined to agree to the idea of the UN until Roosevelt assured him in a private meeting that it would be headed by "four policemen"—the U.S., the UK, the USSR, and China—and that the burden of "policing" Europe would fall to Britain and the Soviet Union. Even then he continued to toy with Roosevelt, demanding that the USSR be given fifteen memberships in the UN (one for each Soviet republic) before finally settling for three.

At the final wartime summit, held in Potsdam in July 1945, America's principal goal was to secure Soviet entry into the war against Japan. While the conference was under way, Harry Truman, who by then had succeeded FDR—and who today is justly remembered as the President who faced up to the Soviet threat and devised our counter-strategy of containment—received a coded message that an atomic weapon had been successfully tested. He shared the news with Stalin, who, according to Truman's memoirs, said "that he was glad to hear it and hoped we would make good use of it against the Japanese." On August 9, the day the second bomb was dropped, the Soviet Union descended like a vulture to devour what it could of Japan's now-moribund empire. In the five days until Tokyo's formal surrender, the Russians seized and occupied Manchuria and northern Korea, with consequences that plague us to this day.

GOING BACK still further in time, we arrive at the disaster wrought by the democracies' summitry with Hitler. The era of appeasement did not amount to a solitary moment of misjudgment by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain at Munich in 1938. Rather, it encompassed several years of

diplomatic exertions by means of which the democracies attempted to cope with the looming threat from both the fascist and the Communist world.

As early as 1935, when Hitler defied the disarmament provisions of the Versailles Treaty, British Foreign Secretary John Simon hastened to Germany for talks with the Fuehrer. Ignoring Germany's violations of the treaty, he agreed with Hitler on a new pact aimed at limiting naval forces. Hitler, who had not the slightest intention of abiding by the pact, would refer to the signing ceremony as "the happiest day of my life." The French, meanwhile, sent Foreign Minister Pierre Laval to Moscow to sign a defense pact with Stalin, and to Rome to offer Benito Mussolini a "free hand" in Ethiopia. When Mussolini subsequently declared his aim of conquering Ethiopia, London dispatched Anthony Eden to try to buy him off by offering up a chunk of British Somaliland instead. The democracies' avidity for talks with any and all potential enemies convinced Mussolini of their weakness; in late 1936 he announced the formation of a "Rome-Berlin Axis."

The story of Munich itself has been too often told to bear repeating, but it is worth recalling that it was not a single meeting but a series of three, with each serving to embolden Hitler further. Not confronting only would the democracies get the war they had hoped to avert, they would get it on the most disadvantageous terms. For in addition to delivering to Hitler the considerable industrial strength of Czechoslovakia, the pusillanimity of the West at Munich had an effect on Stalin similar to what earlier displays of accommodation had on Mussolini. Within months, the Soviet ambassador would visit the German foreign office in Berlin to initiate the conversations that would blossom into the Stalin-Hitler pact.

WHETHER CONFRONTING with fascism in the 1930's, or meeting with Stalin during World War II, Western leaders were played for fools, and their mistakes cost dearly. In their defense, it may be said that they were dealing with something new: messianic revolutionary ideologies and ambitions far more sweeping than those entertained by any conventional power, and men whose behavior was unconstrained by even the least trace of a common morality. Little in diplomatic history had prepared these democratic statesmen to deal with totalitarian dictators.

How then are we to judge our most practiced statesmen today who continue to indulge in similar follies with no such excuse? Two years ago, with America's fortunes in Iraq at a low ebb, Congress

formed an Iraq Study Group led by James Baker and Lee Hamilton and comprising former Senators, Secretaries of State and Defense, White House chiefs of staff, and a Supreme Court Justice. Concluding that the U.S. was losing the war, these eminences rejected either "staying the course," or "precipitous withdrawal," or sending more troops. To square the circle of escaping from Iraq without incurring an American defeat or surrender, they proposed instead a "robust diplomatic effort" involving Iran and Syria—two countries that allegedly "share[d] an interest in avoiding the horrific consequences that would flow from a chaotic Iraq, particularly a humanitarian catastrophe and regional destabilization."

Let us review briefly what we know of these two suggested interlocutors. In the 1980's, the Syrian Baathist regime annihilated 20,000 of its own citizens in order to suppress an Islamist uprising, while the Islamic Republic of Iran in its war with Iraq used waves of human beings as mine sweepers. Both regimes practice systematic torture, and both have reduced their prison populations by slaughtering hundreds of defenseless inmates. The two collaborate in arming Hamas and Hizballah and in turning Lebanon and Gaza into platforms for war. They are the principal conduits for moving, respectively, terrorists and advanced explosives into Iraq.

To imagine that a devotion to "humanitarian" concerns and regional "stability" would lead either of these regimes to set aside its oft-voiced resentments toward the "Great Satan" so as to pull our chestnuts from the fire is to indulge in illusions on the order of those that misled FDR at Yalta, Laval in Rome, and Chamberlain at Munich—without their excuse of historical inexperience. Fortunately, President Bush adopted instead a course specifically *rejected* by the Baker-Hamilton commission. He ordered the "surge," and as a result, by all accounts, we began to turn the tide in Iraq. If we win the war, it will be in no small measure because the counsel of Baker-Hamilton was ignored.

Alas, however, the diplomatic temptation persists, and in the corridors of the Bush White house itself. Having spent, so it seems, its last reservoir of political capital on the surge, the administration has given ground to its critics in other arenas. It has resumed trying to reason with North Korea, sponsored a new round of Israel-Palestinian negotiations, and most recently joined talks with Tehran even while that regime continued enriching uranium. All in all, the verdict on these exercises is likely to be the same as the verdict on all those preceding them: much ventured, little if anything gained, much potentially lost.

TO SAY that talking with our enemies has more often done harm than good does not mean that we should always avoid it. But when we do speak, it is essential that we eschew the conceit that it lies within our power to manipulate or seduce them into becoming friends or serving our interests. If they have truly undergone a metamorphosis and wish to revise their relations with us, they will find ways to let us know about it—as happened both in the case of Mao and Chou and in that of Sadat. That is why it is preposterous to assert, as some continue to do, that at a certain moment in 2003 Tehran sent a message through a Swiss diplomat that it was ready to settle its differences with Washington—but, because the Bush administration failed to seize the opportunity, the moment was lost forever.

What is essential is to understand whom we are talking to. In particular, messianic revolutionary regimes operate in a moral universe whose values are antithetical to ours. Their goal in talking is virtually never to have better relations for their own sake, but to have the advantage of us. The fatal allure of transformative diplomacy is that, by means of summitry, the lions can be charmed not just into lying down with lambs but into becoming lambs. That goal is a chimera; it has never happened.

Finally, we must always remember that such regimes are in a state of permanent war with their own subjects, and that every measure of legitimation they receive from the outside serves to discourage those subjects' hopes for freedom and impair their will to resist. Even the Soviet Union, our superpower counterpart, was eager for the symbolism of being treated by America as an equal. How much more so would the power of the petty tyrants or would-be tyrants who rule Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korea—the countries with whose leaders Barack Obama expressed his readiness to meet in the first year of his administration—be inflated by an audience with an American President. In this, especially, there is much to be lost—by ourselves and by those under their rule.

Should we talk with our enemies? Yes—so that they cannot make an issue of our refusal to do so, and in order to make clear that when they are ready to abandon their hostile policies, we stand ready as always for relations of comity. We should talk to them, that is, on our own terms and not theirs, and with their captive peoples in mind. But to the question that Anderson Cooper put to Senator Obama, the simple and correct answer was "No." If Obama ever gains the presidency, the world will be safer if he has figured that out before he enters office.

Can Libel Tourism Be Stopped?

Andrew C. McCarthy

LAST SPRING, legislators in New York State joined with the governor, David Paterson, in passing a law entitled the Libel Tourism Protection Act. The act has a narrow focus. It empowers the state's courts to invalidate a judgment of libel or defamation against a writer or publisher who resides or does business in New York, so long as that judgment was obtained in a country that affords writers and publishers a lesser degree of free-speech protection than does the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Though the law does not say so explicitly, it was passed without much controversy because a writer in New York State was in danger of being driven into penury by one of the world's richest men—a Saudi banker with Irish citizenship who has undertaken to intimidate and silence writers, editors, and publishers daring to examine his role in the murky world of Islamic charitable giving. Over the past decades, Sheikh Khalid bin Mahfouz has become the world's foremost “libel tourist,” journeying beyond his own country to find a hospitable judge's ear in Great Britain. According to the late Robert O. Collins—whose 2006 book *Alms for Jihad*, co-authored with J. Millard Burr, was one of bin Mahfouz's targets—the tactic has been brilliantly suc-

cessful. In three dozen cases in which legal action has been either threatened or carried through to trial, bin Mahfouz has succeeded in securing apologies and cash damages. Cambridge University Press, the publisher of Collins and Burr's study, had every copy of their book put through a shredder and pulped.

The New York State act is thus a rare piece of favorable news in an otherwise dark story about the efforts of a very rich man to suppress public discussion by means of an innovative use of law that, if taken up by others following his lead, could make the dissemination of information about the Islamofascist threat all but impossible.

FORBES MAGAZINE estimates that Khalid bin Mahfouz possesses personal assets of more than \$3 billion. In 1953, his father, a native of Yemen, was granted the charter for the first bank in Saudi Arabia, the National Commercial Bank (NCB), which grew to be one of the world's largest privately held financial institutions. In the 1980's it was gradually turned over to the son's management.

In the decades since, bin Mahfouz has been a shadowy player in the world of Islamic finance and charity. It seems that, in 1988, he contributed \$270,000 to an organization called the Makhtab al-Khidamat, or “Bureau of Services,” which funded the activities of Arabs choosing to join the fight against the Soviet domination of Afghanistan. The

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Bureau of Services was the brainchild of Osama bin Laden, and the germ of al Qaeda.

In 1991, bin Mahfouz created the Muwafaq Foundation. Muwafaq (or “Blessed Relief”) was organized as an Islamic charity, one of countless such agencies that proliferated in the volatile mixture of oil wealth and Wahhabism. Alms-giving, or *zakat*, is one of the five “pillars of Islam.” But, whatever “charity” may connote in the West, there is, to put it mildly, ambiguity regarding what it means in the various interpretations of Islam. It has been known to include everything from health care for the destitute to explosives for jihadists.

The Muwafaq Foundation has had a furtive and at times notorious history. It is now apparently shuttered, though it is difficult to be sure about this because the charity has primarily operated out of Sudan, where there is very little transparency, and the Channel Islands, which are havens of banking secrecy. There is no question, however, that bin Mahfouz bankrolled the institution with millions of dollars, and that his son Abdulrahman sat on its six-member board of directors.

To run the foundation, bin Mahfouz turned to Yasin al-Qadi, a fellow Saudi entrepreneur who had been a trusted aide at the bank. Shortly after the 9/11 attack on the United States, al-Qadi was formally designated as a terrorist facilitator by the U.S. Treasury Department. Both bin Mahfouz and the Muwafaq organization have been tied by government officials to terrorist financing—the organization more assertively than bin Mahfouz. U.S. authorities have linked the charity, virtually from birth, to jihadist groups in Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, and Bosnia.

IN 1995, Muwafaq was accused by a British newsletter in Africa of having terrorist ties, and a foundation employee was said to have been complicit in a foiled attempt to assassinate Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Sudan. This allegation profoundly embarrassed the Saudi regime, and bin Mahfouz decided to sue the publication for libel. Both the timing and the choice of venue were strategic.

Timing: according to the now-pulped *Alms for Jihad*, the suit against the newsletter was not commenced until after al-Qadi had formally closed down the foundation’s Sudanese operation. This allowed the plaintiffs to claim that any reference to the defunct outfit was defamatory of them in light of their ongoing association with a Channel Island charity that happened to have the same name—even though the evidence indicates that the two charities were, in fact, one and the same.

Venue: bin Mahfouz chose to press his suit in England because British courts present very low jurisdictional hurdles for cases with little connection to the United Kingdom. More important, in stark contrast to American standards, British libel law imposes the burden of proof on the author or journalist to prove the truth of an allegation if an action is brought against him. Facing an opponent with nearly unlimited resources, the newsletter ultimately withdrew its accusations and apologized.

It is doubtful in the extreme that such a thing could have happened in the United States. Modern American defamation law is controlled by the Supreme Court’s landmark 1964 decision in *New York Times v. Sullivan*. It imposes the burden of proof on the public figure who claims to have been libeled. To prevail, moreover, he must demonstrate that an author or reporter was not merely wrong but recklessly or maliciously so.

Virtually all other nations are substantially less generous to the working order of a free press in its coverage of public figures. Notable in this regard is Great Britain, which has no First Amendment and boasts an abiding veneration of personal reputation. Indeed, and again in contrast to the United States, Britain has a long tradition of subordinating speech to other values. There are, for example, significant restrictions on public comment about ongoing legal proceedings—inhibiting not only the litigants but the press. It is also a simpler matter to suppress so-called “hate speech” in England than in the United States, where such speech may not be criminalized absent indications of a clear and imminent threat of serious lawlessness.

Add to all this the fact that British courts require a case to have only the most attenuated connection to Britain for it to be heard, and one has all the ingredients necessary for libel tourism. American journalists or authors who do not even attempt to disseminate their work in the UK can nevertheless find themselves hauled into a British court—and, worse, unable to vindicate their First Amendment rights in American courts, where higher hurdles make it difficult to countersue.

Bin Mahfouz, it is clear, scours the international media for mentions of Saudi support of terror in general and allegations about himself in particular. When he finds them, he routinely threatens the offending writers and publications with legal action in England if swift retractions and other curative actions are not forthcoming. The strategy has worked like a charm, as the tale of bin Mahfouz’s efforts against *Alms for Jihad* confirms.

IN NEARLY 300 pages of text, *Alms for Jihad* addresses or otherwise mentions bin Mahfouz about a dozen times. Some passages offer background information, for example on the rise of his family bank and its involvement in the huge financial scandal surrounding the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) in the late 1980's. Here the book makes no mention of a terrorism connection. A few other fleeting citations tie bin Mahfouz and his family to financial institutions and Islamic charities. The most substantive treatment focuses on the Muwafaq Foundation, and there, in the main, the action revolves around its director, al-Qadi, with bin Mahfouz portrayed as the hovering background figure—perhaps pulling the strings, perhaps an innocent dupe.

To be sure, the book's self-proclaimed significance lies in its being "the first," as the authors claimed, "to piece together, from a vast array of sources, the secret and complex financial systems that support terror." Its thesis is that financial institutions and Islamic charities, especially those based in Saudi Arabia, form the backbone of these systems. Bin Mahfouz is plainly depicted as one of the vertebrae. Yet, as Collins maintained before his death earlier this year, "We were careful when writing *Alms for Jihad* not to state explicitly that Sheikh Mahfouz was funding terrorism."

Indeed, compared with what U.S. government officials have said for public consumption about bin Mahfouz and Muwafaq, *Alms for Jihad* is mild. Thus, even before Yasin al-Qadi was formally named a "specially designated global terrorist" by the Treasury Department, an FBI affidavit had already accused this aide of bin Mahfouz of funneling \$820,000 to Hamas. On October 12, 2001, in connection with its formal designation, Treasury issued an official press release describing al-Qadi as "head of the Saudi-based Muwafaq Foundation, which transferred millions to Mr. bin Laden." The charity itself was also called "an al-Qaeda front that receives funding from wealthy Saudi businessmen." Al-Qadi, who like bin Mahfouz admits knowing bin Laden and supporting him during the anti-Soviet jihad, denies promoting al Qaeda and claims the Hamas transaction was merely a loan to a friend.

Like bin Mahfouz and Muwafaq, al-Qadi has never been actually charged with a terrorism crime. Nevertheless, shortly after designating al-Qadi a terrorist, Treasury issued a letter to Swiss authorities contending as follows:

The Muwafaq Foundation provided logistical and financial support for a *mujahideen* battalion in Bosnia. The Foundation also operated in

Sudan, Somalia, and Pakistan, among other places. A number of individuals employed by or otherwise associated with the Muwafaq Foundation have connections to various terrorist organizations. . . . The Muwafaq Foundation also provided support to Hamas and the Abu Sayyaf organization in the Philippines.

Elaborating still further, Treasury claimed that Muwafaq "also employed and served as cover for Islamic extremists connected with Makhtab al-Khidamat"—the forerunner of al Qaeda—offices of which were also designated as terrorist entities. In sum, U.S. officials concluded that the foundation forged by bin Mahfouz fit the pattern of other Islamic "relief" organizations known to have been complicit with terrorists, all this providing a "reasonable basis to believe that they have facilitated terrorist activities."*

OF COURSE, the fact that bin Mahfouz created and bankrolled a charity said to have aided Islamic militants would not necessarily mean he knew such aid was being extended. But such connections certainly invite robust inquiry. Presumably, that was what Cambridge University Press believed when it accepted *Alms for Jihad* for publication.

The book, released in both the United States and Great Britain, went through an extensive editorial process. As Collins wrote, "I had previously warned the editor . . . that some of this material could prove contentious, and in March 2005 [the publisher's] legal advisers . . . spent a month vetting the book before going into production and finally its publication." Upon being served the anticipated threat of legal action by bin Mahfouz, Cambridge requested and received from Burr and Collins mounds of back-up information to support their claims.

But then it quickly capitulated. In order to convince bin Mahfouz to quash his pending suit, the press issued an apology accepting that "there is *no truth whatsoever* in these serious allegations" (emphasis added). Nor did Cambridge leave it at that. "To emphasize their regret," the publishers declared, they had "agreed to pay Sheikh Khalid substantial damages and to make a contribution to his legal costs." In addition, boosting bin Mahfouz's

* Chicago prosecutors have also submitted to a federal court a document, dating back to al Qaeda's founding, that lists about twenty top donors referred to by bin Laden and other insiders as "the Golden Chain." The list includes a "bin Mahfouz," without a first name. Assuming that this is Khaled bin Mahfouz, the question is whether the list represents what bin Laden was hoping for on the basis of a past contribution or expecting on the basis of an ongoing relationship.

public image, Cambridge evidently felt compelled to stress publicly that all such moneys were going to be donated by "Sheikh Khalid" to UNICEF. Finally, Cambridge reclaimed unsold copies, urged libraries the world over to remove *Alms for Jihad* from their shelves, and destroyed all existing stock.

This was not, it appears, undertaken out of conviction. As Collins told a writer for the *Weekly Standard*, "Cambridge, frankly, came to us and said, 'There's no way we can win this case.' And I had to agree with them. . . . It's probably the cheapest way out." In effect, Collins wrote in an online posting, Cambridge University Press

was not prepared to embark on a long and very expensive litigation it could not possibly win under English libel law in the English High Court, known to journalists as the "Club Med for Libel Tourists." [Bin Mahfouz's counsel] was quite candid. "Our client . . . chose to complain to [Cambridge] about the book because the book was published in this jurisdiction by them" where he had previously threatened to "sue some 36 U.S. and UK publishers and authors" and in which Sheikh Mahfouz had previously won three suits for the same charges of his alleged financing of terrorism.

Collins and Burr did not participate in the settlement. They did not pay or apologize. But, of course, their book and the years of work it represents have disappeared. Except for the stray clandestine copy that snakes about the land of the First Amendment like a product of *samizdat*, it is unavailable for purchase or perusal.

EVEN BEFORE his triumph against *Alms for Jihad*, Mahfouz had targeted another author: an Israeli-born expert in terrorist financing named Rachel Ehrenfeld, who published a book in 2003 entitled *Funding Evil: How Terrorism Is Financed—And How To Stop It*. Echoing the Treasury Department's aggressive tone (and many of its assertions) in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Ehrenfeld was less equivocal about bin Mahfouz in her book than Burr and Collins would be in theirs. She declared, for example:

The former chairman of the National Commercial Bank (NCB) in Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Khalid bin Mahfouz, . . . is alleged to have deposited tens of millions of dollars in London and New York directly into terrorist accounts—the accounts of the same terrorists who were implicated in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, in

which 224 people were killed, including twelve Americans, and more than 4,000 were injured.

Ehrenfeld did repeatedly qualify such assertions by stipulating that bin Mahfouz "denie[d] that he has funded terrorism" and insisted, to the contrary, that his beneficence was directed to good-faith charity. But she described him as the force behind a banking conglomerate responsible for transferring, in the aggregate, over \$70 million to Muwafaq and to the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), which in turn allegedly funded al Qaeda and its affiliates.* Sketching the bigger picture, Ehrenfeld portrayed the Saudis as making a practice of funding terrorism by diverting millions of dollars that course through ostensibly charitable institutions.

In a second edition of *Funding Evil* (2005), Ehrenfeld went on to describe the experience of being stalked by bin Mahfouz's battalion of lawyers. It began with a letter insisting that "contrary to allegations reported in this book, bin Mahfouz does not have now and never had 'any involvement or association with the sponsoring of al-Qaeda,' nor has he ever 'knowingly financed terrorism of any description and vehemently den[ies] this.'" The lawyers proceeded to demand:

An undertaking to the High Court in England not to repeat the same (or similar) allegations.

The immediate withdrawal from circulation and destruction and/or delivery up of all unsold copies of the book.

A public letter of apology.

A donation to a charity agreed to by bin Mahfouz.

Payment of the legal fees involved.

Unlike *Alms for Jihad*, Ehrenfeld's book had not been released in the UK. But through the Internet, about two dozen copies of *Funding Evil* were purchased in England. For bin Mahfouz's sympathetic British court, that small hook was enough to trigger jurisdiction. Ehrenfeld, who lives and works in New York City, initially indicated she would answer the case, but finally decided to default in light of the time and expense of litigating in a foreign country where the legal deck was stacked. The British court promptly ordered her to repudiate her statements about bin Mahfouz, destroy copies

* IIRO is a major Saudi non-governmental organization with branch offices throughout the world. In 2006, the U.S. Treasury Department formally designated its Philippines and Indonesia branches, as well as one of its chief Saudi executives, as terror facilitators.

of her book, refrain from “publishing, or causing or authorizing the further publication” of her assertions, apologize to bin Mahfouz publicly, and pay him over \$200,000 in damages and legal costs.

Ehrenfeld ignored this order, and fought back. Her attorneys filed a creative suit against bin Mahfouz in a Manhattan federal court, seeking a declaratory judgment that he could not prevail on a libel claim under federal and New York state law and that the British judgment was therefore unenforceable in America. Bin Mahfouz, who exhibits no compunction about dragging American writers to a tribunal thousands of miles from their homes, responded that because he neither resides nor does business in New York (at least not since his bank here was closed), it would violate the U.S. Constitution for a court to exert jurisdiction over him.

At first, Ehrenfeld suffered a series of setbacks. Because Mahfouz had made no move to collect on the British judgment, a federal district judge rejected her effort to bring him before an American court and subject him to the kind of searching discovery entailed by U.S. civil litigation. An appellate panel, however, was sensitive to the professional harm that bin Mahfouz’s strategy portended for journalists in general: even if he did not seek to collect, it ruled, the implicit specter of additional lawsuits and damages was sure to scare off potential publishers and sponsors, making it difficult for a writer to work. But then the state’s highest court, when asked to weigh in by the appeals panel, ruled that this consideration made no difference: bin Mahfouz did not have sufficient ties to New York to be sued there.

FORTUNATELY, THIS was enough to jolt New York State’s rancorous legislature out of its usual paralysis, and the Libel Tourism Protection Act became law on May 1 of this year. Reversing the result in Ehrenfeld’s case, the act also means to protect future publishers by declaring unenforceable those judgments in foreign courts that appear to abridge the free-speech rights of New York businesses and individuals.

More relief may be on the way. Congressman Peter King, a New York Republican, has introduced federal legislation, the Free Speech Protection Act, to combat libel tourism, and the initiative

has upper-chamber support from Senators Joseph Lieberman, Arlen Specter, and Charles Schumer. Beyond a declaration that a foreign judgment is unenforceable in the United States (which bin Mahfouz already knows and does not care about), the federal proposal would allow countersuits for money damages against libel tourists who scheme to suppress free-expression rights.

This is urgently needed. Bin Mahfouz and others like him will not be dissuaded unless they face the prospect of losing assets and of facing lawsuits against them that could trigger a process of civil discovery—to say nothing of seeing their terror ties featured in news stories.

There has been another hopeful sign in the UK. In 2006, Britain’s Law Lords broke salient new ground in the case of *Jameel v. Wall Street Journal Europe*, shifting British defamation law closer to American standards. It is not a complete alignment by any stretch, and its scope must still be tested by litigation. But established journalists accused of publishing falsehoods will now enjoy a “qualified privilege” when they have reported responsibly on matters truly in the public interest.

IN THE END, the story of libel tourism—like that of unofficial speech codes, official attempts to purge our lexicon of references to terms like jihad and Islamofascism, and human-rights commissions that, under the guise of policing “hate speech,” exercise a chilling effect on the telling of inconvenient truths—concerns far more than the personal interests of those directly targeted. There is an urgent public interest at stake: the need to understand and address financial support systems that invigorate the terror networks targeting Americans for mass murder.

If the libel tourist is not brought to heel, journalists will hesitate to write about the central national-security challenges of our time. The story of Saudi support for Islamic terror will not be told, and the enablers of jihad will have succeeded in shaping the parameters of public debate. If, on the other hand, the tide is truly turning against them, the passage of New York State’s law will prove to have been a significant victory in the ongoing battle to allow Americans to speak openly and honestly about the threats facing their nation and the world.

Jews and Their DNA

Hillel Halkin

EIGHT YEARS ago, I published an article in these pages called “Wandering Jews—and Their Genes” (September 2000). At the time I was working on a book about a Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group in the northeast Indian states of Mizoram and Manipur, many of whose members believe that they descend from the biblical tribe of Manasseh, and about a group of Judaizers among them known as the B’nei Menashe, over a thousand of whom live today in Israel as converts to Judaism.

This led me to an interest in Jewish historical genetics, then a new discipline. Historical genetics itself was still a pioneering field, launched by the discovery that two sources of DNA in the human body, the Y chromosome that determines male sex and the mitochondria that aid cell metabolism, never change (barring rare mutations) in their transmission from fathers to sons and from mothers to children of both sexes. This made it possible to trace paternal and maternal lines of descent far into the past and to learn about the movements and interactions of human populations that originated hundreds, thousands, and even tens of thousands of years ago.

In my article, I observed that preliminary studies in Jewish genetics had both “shored up” and “undermined” some conventional ideas about Jewish history. On the one hand, they had indicated

that there was a high degree of Y-chromosome similarity among Jewish males from all over the world, coupled with a much lower degree when the comparison was made between Jews and non-Jews in the same region. The one part of the globe in which Jews correlated as highly with many non-Jews as they did with other Jews was the Middle East—precisely what one might expect of a people that claimed to have originated in Palestine (or in Ur of the Chaldees, if you go back to Abraham) and to have spread from it.

Other studies established that the Y chromosomes of *kobanim*—male Jews said to descend from the priestly caste whose supposed progenitor was the biblical Aaron—had their own unique DNA signature, labeled the Cohen Modal Haplotype. Not only did half of all *kobanim*, who comprise about four percent of the world’s Jewish population, share this DNA configuration, but minor mutations in it pointed to a common ancestor who lived a few centuries before or after 1000 B.C.E.—that is, close to the period in which Aaron and his brother Moses are situated by biblical chronology.

Such evidence seemed to confirm traditional notions of Jewish origins. It suggested that the Jews, while certainly not a “race,” were indeed, despite the skepticism of many modern historians, the highly endogamous people they had always considered themselves to be, one that had admixed with outsiders relatively little during long centuries of wandering in the Diaspora. It also strengthened

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the reliability of the Bible as a historical source. Modern critics who contended that the Bible was a late document that imagined a largely non-existent past had always singled out the priestly codes of the Pentateuch as a prime illustration of this. But if the priesthood was really an institution going back to early Israelite history, rather than the backward projection in time of later generations, revisionist Bible criticism itself needed to be revised.

Yet there was contrary evidence, too. Early studies of mitochondrial DNA reported that Jewish women, unlike Jewish men, did not correlate well with one another globally. Furthermore, the greatest demographic mystery of Jewish history—that of the origins of the Ashkenazi population of Central and Eastern Europe—had only appeared to deepen.

The standard Jewish version of these origins was that Ashkenazi Jewry had first crystallized in the late first millennium of the Christian era in the French-German borderland along the Rhine; that it had reached the Rhineland from southern France, to which it had come in earlier centuries either directly from Palestine or via Italy and Spain; and that it had then migrated eastward and northward into Central and Eastern Europe. Even before the advent of historical genetics, however, this account had been challenged. There were linguists who argued that East European Yiddish, the Germanic language of most Ashkenazi Jews, had more in common with the dialects of southern and southeastern Germany than with those of the Rhineland in the west. There were demographers who contended that the Jewish population of the Rhineland prior to the appearance of East European Jewry, which would eventually become the world's largest Jewish community, was too small to account for the latter's rapid growth.

The early genetic findings appeared to support the challengers. If the Rhineland theory was correct, Ashkenazi DNA should have had greater affinities with non-Jewish DNA from northern France and western Germany than with non-Jewish DNA from elsewhere; no one denied, after all, that wherever and whenever Jews had lived, some Gentiles must have joined them or begotten children with them. Yet there was no sign of this. Where, then, had Ashkenazi Jewry come from?

It was a mixed picture. Since then, eight years have gone by, historical genetics has greatly refined its methods and taxonomy, and several major new studies in Jewish genetic history have been published. What, viewed from their perspective, does Jewish history look like now?

TWO NEW books address this question. One, David B. Goldstein's *Jacob's Legacy: A Genetic View of Jewish History*, is the work of a scientist who teaches at Duke University and has been personally involved in much Jewish genetic research.* The other, Jon Entine's *Abraham's Children: Race, Identity, and the DNA of the Chosen People*, is by a layman and journalist.† Yet since Entine has done a serious and responsible job of reporting, and Goldstein has written a non-technical survey for the general reader, the difference between them is one more of style than of substance. They agree on most major points, starting with the puzzling disparity in the distribution patterns of Jewish Y-chromosome and mitochondrial DNA.

The fact of this disparity is now solidly established. There is no doubt that statistically (and *only* statistically: it is important to keep in mind that any randomly chosen Jewish individual may prove an exception to the rule), Jewish males with antecedents in such widely separated places as Yemen, Georgia, and Bukhara in Central Asia are far more likely to share similar Y-chromosome DNA with one another than with Yemenite, Georgian, or Bukharan non-Jews. Jewish females from the same backgrounds, on the other hand, yield opposite results: their mitochondrial DNA has markedly less resemblance to that of Jewish women from elsewhere than it does to that of non-Jewish women in the countries their families hailed from. The main difference between them and these Gentile women is that their mitochondrial DNA is less varied—that is, they descend from a small number of maternal ancestors. Geneticists call such a phenomenon, in which a sizable population has developed from a very small number of progenitors, a “founder” or “bottleneck” effect. (In “bottlenecks,” these few progenitors are survivors of larger groups that were drastically reduced by war, famine, plague, or other calamities.)

This calls for a new understanding of the spread of Jewish settlement in the Diaspora. Until now, it has been assumed that nearly all of the world's Jewish communities began with the migration of cross-sections of older communities, which took their families, institutions, and practices with them and perpetuated their lives in new surroundings. Now, it would seem, as David Goldstein writes, that

[some] Jewish men . . . travel[ed] long distances to establish small Jewish communities [by themselves]. They would settle in new lands

* Yale, 176 pp., \$26.00.

† Grand Central, 432 pp., \$27.99.

and, if unmarried, take local women for wives. The communities might [at a later date] have been augmented by additional male travelers from Jewish source populations. Once they were established, however, the barriers would go up against further input of new mitochondrial DNA, precisely because of female-defined ethnicity [i.e., the halakhic practice of determining Jewishness by the mother]; few [additional] females would be permitted to join.

Presumably, these adventurous bachelors setting out (perhaps on business ventures) for far lands could not persuade Jewish women to come with them, or else they traveled to their destinations with no intention of staying there. In the absence of rabbis to perform conversions, they married local women who, while consenting to live as Jews, were not halakhically Jewish. By halakhic standards, therefore, their descendants were not Jewish, either, even though their Jewishness was not challenged by the rabbinical authorities. Although such communities must, in their first generations, have known the truth about themselves, this does not appear to have bothered them or anyone else very much.

IN A CLASS by itself is the mitochondrial DNA of Ashkenazi women. It does not correlate closely with the DNA of non-Jewish women in Western, Central, or Eastern Europe and it has a large Middle Eastern component. Yet in their maternal lineage, Ashkenazim, too, exhibit a strong “founder effect.” Over forty percent of them, a 2005 study showed, descend from just four “founding mothers” having Middle-Eastern-profile mitochondrial DNA. Since Ashkenazi Y-chromosome DNA does not exhibit so dramatic a founder’s effect, one can assume that Ashkenazi Jewry, too, began with the migration of a preponderantly male group of Jews to new territories. Because these territories, however, were more contiguous with the old ones than were far-flung regions like Bukhara or Yemen, the men were more able to import wives from existing Jewish communities and less dependent on marrying local Gentiles.

But where did Ashkenazi Jewry, male and female alike, derive from if not from the Rhineland? One possibility that is more consistent with the linguistic data is that it entered southern Germany from northern Italy and pushed further north from there into the Slavic-speaking areas of Europe. Another is that Jews migrated to Slavic lands from the Byzantine Empire. These hypotheses, which are not mutually exclusive, can now claim a measure of scientific support, since the Y chromosomes of Ashkenazi

Jews have more in common with those of Italians and Greeks than with those of West Europeans.

A more dramatic scenario, popularized by Arthur Koestler in his 1976 book *The Thirteenth Tribe*, has to do with the Khazars, a Turkish people living between the Black and Caspian Seas, whose royal house adopted Judaism (with what degree of rabbinical supervision, we have no way of knowing) in the 8th century C.E. A great deal is obscure in the history of the Khazar kingdom, which at its apogee ruled much of present-day Ukraine, and the degree of the Judaization of its population is uncertain. Yet Koestler and a small number of historians on whom he based himself were convinced that, following the destruction of this kingdom in the 11th century by its Slavic enemies, many of its Jews fled westward to form the nucleus of what was to become East European Jewry.*

The Khazar theory never had many backers in scholarly circles; there was little evidence to support it and good reasons to be dubious about it. Why, for instance, does medieval rabbinic literature almost never mention the Khazars? Why, if they spoke a Turkish language, did East European Jewry become Yiddish-speaking? “Like virtually every academic I have ever consulted on the subject,” David Goldstein writes, “I was initially quite dismissive of Koestler’s identification of the Khazars [with] Ashkenazi Jewry.” Yet, he continues, “I am no longer so sure. The Khazar connection seems no more farfetched than the spectacular continuity of the Cohen line.”

This is one of the few occasions on which Jon Entine disagrees with him. *Abraham’s Children* declares:

The studies of the Y-chromosome and [mitochondrial] DNA do not support the . . . notion that Jews are descended in any great numbers from the Khazars or some Slavic group, although it’s evident some Jews do have Khazarian blood. The Khazarian theory has been put to rest, or at least into perspective.

WHO IS right? Either could be, for the latest evidence is ambiguous. It consists of two studies. One, “Y-Chromosome Evidence for a

* An assimilationist Jew and at one time of his life an idiosyncratic Zionist, Koestler was attracted to this theory because it demonstrated, so he thought, that the Jews of the Diaspora were a “pseudo-nation” held together by “a system of traditional beliefs based on racial and historical premises which turn out to be illusory.” Either, therefore, they should emigrate to Israel or they should cease to exist. Ironically, however, Koestler’s book was soon enlisted by Arab propaganda in its war against Israel and Zionism. What claim could the Jews have to Palestine, Arab spokesmen asked, if their original ancestors came from southern Russia?

Founder Effect in Ashkenazi Jews," was published in 2004 in the *European Journal of Human Genetics* by a small team from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The other was the work of a larger, American-Israeli-British group to which Goldstein belonged; its report, "Multiple Origins of Ashkenazi Levites: Y-Chromosome Evidence for Both Near Eastern and European Ancestries," appeared in the *American Journal of Human Genetics* in 2003. Both studies discuss a mutation, widely found in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine, that occurs in a Y-chromosome classification known as Haplogroup R, at a DNA site labeled M117.

The Hebrew University study states:

Recent genetic studies . . . showed that Ashkenazi Jews are more closely related to other Jewish and Middle Eastern groups than to their host populations in Europe. However, Ashkenazim have an elevated frequency of R-M117, the dominant Y-chromosome haplogroup in Eastern Europeans, suggesting possible gene flow [into the Ashkenazi population]. In the present study of 495 Y chromosomes of Ashkenazim, 57 (11.5 percent) were found to belong to R-M117.

As for the American-Israeli-British study, it was designed to ascertain whether Levites, who functioned as priests' assistants in the ancient Temple and are supposedly also descended from Aaron, have a worldwide genetic signature similar to or the same as the Cohen Modal Haplotype.* The answer turned out to be negative, since the Y chromosomes of Levites from different geographical backgrounds proved to correlate no better with one another than they did with the Y chromosomes of non-Levitic Jews. And yet, rather astonishingly, Ashkenazi Levites, when taken separately, do have a "modal haplotype" of their own—and it is the same R-M117 mutation on which the Hebrew University study centered! Fifty-two percent of them have this mutation, which is rarely found in non-Ashkenazi Jews and has a clear non-Jewish provenance.

WHAT IS one to make of this finding? An 11.5-percent incidence of R-M117 among Ashkenazi Jews in general is easily explainable: the mutation could have entered the Jewish gene pool slowly, in small increments in every generation, during the thousand years of Ashkenazi Jewry's existence. (This need not necessarily have been via conversion to Judaism and marriage to Jewish women. Pre- and extra-marital sexual relations, and even rape, widespread in times of anti-Jewish violence, were in all

likelihood more common.) But the 52-percent rate among Levites is something else. Here we are dealing not with a gradual, long-term process (for no imaginable process could have produced such results), but with a one-time event of some sort.

Such an event could obviously not have been a sudden influx of Levites into the Jewish community from a Gentile society. Both of our studies, therefore, raise the possibility that the original R-M117 Levites were Khazarian Jews who migrated westward upon the fall of the Khazar kingdom. Of course, since all or most Khazarian Jews were converts (although some may have been Jews who came from elsewhere), few could have descended from Aaron. Yet it is quite possible that some became, or were designated, "honorary" Levites in the course of the Judaization of the Khazarian population. As the American-Israeli-British study observes, Jews traditionally held to "a lesser degree of stringency for the assumption of Levite status than for the assumption of Cohen status," so that self-declared Khazarian Levites might have fathered lineages whose Levitic pedigree came to be accepted.

But if R-M117 did enter the East European Jewish gene pool via a lineage of Khazar Levites, how many Khazars can be assumed to have joined the Ashkenazi community? At this point, it becomes pure guesswork. Analyzing the data, the American-Israeli-British study concludes that the number of R-M117 Levites absorbed by Ashkenazi Jewry ranged from one to fifty individuals. But as much as we might like to do the rest of the arithmetic ourselves, we can't. For one thing, we have no way of knowing what the percentage of Levites in the Khazarian Jewish population was. Nor do we know the percentage of Khazars possessing M117, which is found in 12 or 13 percent of Russian and Ukrainian males today. If these were also its proportions among the Khazars, there would have been seven non-M117 Khazars joining or founding Ashkenazi Jewry for every Khazar who had the mutation.

In sum, even if the R-M117 Levites are traceable to Khazaria, the total flow of Khazarians into the East European Jewish population could have been anywhere from a single person to many thousands. If it was the latter, the Khazar input was significant, as David Goldstein suspects it was; if the former, it was trivial, as Jon Entine believes. The last eight years of research in Jewish historical genetics have not left us any wiser in this respect.

* Constituting, like priests, about four percent of the world's Jews, Levites can easily be identified because, again like priests, they are assigned minor tasks in Jewish ritual to this day, so that every religiously observant Levite knows he is one.

TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTS of Jewish history, it would appear, are part true and part myth. Despite their dispersion in space and time, the Jews have continued to be that most curious (and in the eyes of many, preposterous) of combinations: at once a people or nation, fellow communicants in the world's oldest monotheistic religion, and a family or tribe belonged to only by those born or married into it. They could not have remained such an amalgam had they not clung to strict rules of membership and admission.

Yet these rules were not observed everywhere or always. There were periods and places in which a blind eye was turned to them, most often when violations were not remediable. Had a rabbi arrived in Yemen or Bukhara soon after the founding of its Jewish community, he might have been able to insist on the halakhic conversion of its handful of Jews. But this would no longer have been practicable after several generations had gone by, especially since Yemenite and Bukharan Jews would have forgotten by then that their maternal progenitors were not halakhically Jewish and would have reacted with resentment to such a demand. Similarly, Khazars identifying themselves as Levites were accepted as such without inquiries into their past. It is an old rabbinic adage that one does not inflict demands on the public that the public is incapable of meeting. Better a tolerated myth than an intolerable truth.

Such, at any rate, was the attitude of a pre-modern age in which all Jews accepted rabbinic authority, so that all rabbis felt obliged to find solutions for all Jews. Since the mid-19th century, however, this has progressively ceased to be true. Rabbinic authority itself has fractured and dissipated. Most Jews no longer want rabbis to be responsible for them, and most rabbis no longer feel responsible for most Jews. The consequence of this, as reflected in the "Who Is A Jew?" debate that has racked world Jewry for the past several decades, is that the Jewish tribe is breaking up. In the United States, Orthodox rabbis do not recognize the Jewishness of converts to Reform or Conservative Judaism, Conservative rabbis do not recognize the Jewishness of children born to Jewish fathers but not to Jewish mothers, and Reform rabbis routinely preside over the marriages of Jewish men to non-Jewish women even though they may be creating future generations that they alone will consider Jewish.

In Israel, where non-Orthodox marriages and conversions cannot be performed, the problem is even more severe, for Jewishness in a Jewish state is a secular legal category as well. Israel's Law of Return, for example, guarantees the right to immi-

grate and acquire Israeli citizenship to every Jew and his immediate family, including the first two generations of his descendants. Yet the more contentious the question of who is a Jew becomes, the more this law divides Jews rather than unites them.

Meanwhile, already living in Israel are hundreds of thousands of halakhically non-Jewish immigrants, most from the former Soviet Union, who entered the country under the Law of Return because they were either married to Jews or had a Jewish father or grandfather. As matters stand now, they and their children cannot have a Jewish wedding in Israel. Many of them, probably most, would like recognition as Jews, and not a few would be willing to convert in order to obtain it. But Israel's Orthodox rabbinate has made the conversion procedure so difficult, in part by hinging it on the promise to live an Orthodox life, that most prospective converts have been deterred. Recently, perhaps for the first time in Jewish history, a conversion was retroactively annulled by the rabbinate on the grounds that such a promise was not kept.

For its part, the rabbinate insists that it has been forced to adopt more rigorous standards by the secular nature of Israeli society, which precludes the kind of "honor system" for determining Jewish identity that was operative in Jewish life in the past. Even Israelis whose Jewishness might appear to be beyond question now find themselves questioned about it.

TO TAKE a small personal example: my Israeli-born daughter, whose Israeli ID card lists her as "Jewish" and who is getting married in Israel this month, has been required to provide a letter from an Orthodox rabbi in the United States, where I and my wife were born and raised, attesting to the Orthodox ceremony in which we were wed in New York. The reasoning behind this is simple. Had we been married in Israel, this would have been considered proof of our daughter's Jewishness, since our own Jewishness would already have been rabbinically certified. But if we were married in a non-Orthodox ceremony in the United States, we would have to bring further proof of our Jewishness since no non-Orthodox rabbi could be trusted to have vetted us properly.

And what could such further proof be? If we could find no Orthodox rabbi to speak for us, it would indeed be difficult to supply. My daughter would then have had the option of either arduously trying to assemble convincing evidence or of getting married outside of Israel (in which case her marriage would be recognized by Israeli secular law). Yet if she were to choose the second of these

courses, as an increasing number of young Israelis are doing nowadays in their disinclination to deal with the rabbinate, she would in effect be choosing it for her children, too, since by the time *they* reached marriageable age, proof of their Jewishness would be even more difficult. In this manner, a growing public is being created in Israel that is losing its Jewish status in the eyes of rabbinic law.

The rabbinate's position is understandable. Once, when there was no secular advantage in being Jewish, there was no reason to suspect anyone's declaration of Jewishness; now, such avowals can no longer be taken at face value. And understandable, too, is the position of Israeli secularists who are indifferent to the rabbinate's attitude or even welcome it.

For such secular Israelis, the idea of biological Jewishness is an embarrassing anachronism. Secular Zionism, after all, set out to normalize Jewish existence. Surely, they reason, its goal should therefore be to make Israelis a people whose identity is based, like that of other peoples, on territory, language, and culture rather than on shared blood ties. If Orthodoxy wishes to hasten this process, so much the better. Perhaps one day Israel will become the "state of all its citizens" that democratic values require it to be, a country of Hebrew-speaking Jews, Muslims, and Christians, all equal before the law. Although the great majority of secular Israelis do not yet subscribe to this point of view, more and more will come to it if things continue on their present course.

As far as much of the rest of the world is concerned, biological Jewishness has *always* been an embarrassing anachronism—at least ever since the time of the Roman Empire and early Christianity. For the most part, Jews have nevertheless managed to go their own unembarrassed way. The genetic record shows that they have on the whole succeeded. But this is only, the same record shows, because they have made a point in the past of not embarrassing one another. There is a lot of DNA in the Jewish people that came in, as it were, through the back door. Unless ways are found to keep this door open, the walls of the house may have to be torn down.

IN 2003, a year after the publication of my book *Across the Sabbath River*, I became involved in a historical genetics-research project myself. I did so at the invitation of two geneticists whose names appear on many of the scientific papers mentioned in this article: Professor Karl Skorecki and Dr. Doron Behar of Rambam Hospital and the Rappaport Research Institute in Haifa. They had read my book and wanted to know how I felt about taking part in

a DNA study of the Mizo and Kuki people of northeast India, the purpose of which would be to determine whether there was evidence for a "Jewish"—that is, a Middle Eastern—origin for any of them.

Both men had qualms about the matter. Unlike other genetic investigations they had participated in, this one might have practical consequences. The B'nei Menashe believe that they descend from one of the "ten lost tribes" of Israel that was driven into exile by the Assyrians in the 8th century B.C.E. This belief, which first surfaced in Mizoram and Manipur in the 1950's, is basic to their identity. Because of it, they have chosen to live Jewish lives and to convert once they have managed to reach Israel.

In my book I had come to the unexpected conclusion that there was a kernel of historical truth in their claim, although I did not think that more than a tiny fraction of Mizos and Kukis might have distant Israelite ancestors. What would happen, Skorecki and Behar asked, when our study was published? Whatever its findings, they would be certain to disappoint the B'nei Menashe and perhaps even to undermine their sense of Jewishness. And what if these findings were seized on by those in the Israeli government who wished to shut the country's gates to the B'nei Menashe? Did we have the moral right to take such risks?

I answered that I thought we did. (This is the only basis I can imagine for David Goldstein's strange statement in *Jacob's Legacy* that I "agitated for the Mizos to undergo DNA tests in order to vindicate their claims.") Israel's gates had already been shut—and, apart from briefly swinging open again in 2006-7, have remained so—and even if one did not agree that the scientific truth was worth pursuing at all costs, someone else would pursue it in this case if we didn't. It was best for the work to be done by an Israeli team that was sensitive to the issues involved.

In the end, we went ahead. Three rounds of sampling, based on the theories in my book and involving approximately 500 people, were carried out in India in 2003, 2006, and 2007. Although Goldstein writes (on what grounds, I again don't know) that "most" Mizos and Kukis "resisted" genetic testing, I am aware of only one case in which someone who was asked to be sampled refused to cooperate. The difficulties were of an entirely different nature, such as a suitcase full of samples that was lost for several days in Tashkent, or the fact that at a critical juncture one of our samplers was murdered for reasons having nothing to do with our study.

The final lab results are now being tabulated.

They will not, so it seems, be earth-shaking. Nearly all of the samples have turned out to have typically Tibeto-Burmese DNA. Although a very few look Middle Eastern, there may be no way of absolutely ruling out other possible sources for them. After all our effort, the results are inconclusive. And in any case, as historical geneticists are fond of saying, "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." There are many reasons why an originally small input of DNA might not turn up in a study: its bearers may have failed to reproduce their lineage, or the sample may be too small, or a crucial population group may be missing from it.

It has not been my impression, however, that the B'nei Menashe are waiting for the results with bated breath. In the five years that have passed since the study was commenced, scarcely any of them has contacted me to ask about it, and there has been, as far as I know, little discussion of it in their community. There appears to be no reason to think that, when eventually published, it will have much of an impact on them or their fate.

This comes as a relief. Despite my assurances to Skorecki and Behar, I too had my doubts. But the B'nei Menashe are more grounded in their own beliefs than we had feared. They will stick to them regardless of what two highly professional geneticists and one sadly amateur historian say in some scientific journal.

THIS, I THINK, is as it should be. There may be a few people who can subsist on an austere regimen of all truth and no myth, and there are all too many people who live on a flabby diet of all

myth and no truth. But some indeterminably proportioned combination of the two dispositions is what most of us require for our health. This is as true of societies as it is of individuals.

I myself have long suspected, starting far before I knew anything of historical genetics or Arthur Koestler's *The Thirteenth Tribe*, that I have Khazar blood in me. One of my father's sisters had distinctly slanty eyes. In one of her daughters, these are even more pronounced. The daughter's daughter has features that could come straight from the steppes of Asia.

I rather like the idea of Khazar forefathers. Far from deconstructing my Jewishness, it romanticizes it even more. The thought that my distant ancestors on the plains of Russia had the intelligence and folly to choose Judaism for their religion; that they prayed to a Jewish God as they rode into battle; that (as the historians tell us) they held back the Muslim invasion of Europe from the east and helped keep the West safe for Dante and Shakespeare. Does it make me feel that, as Arab propaganda would have it, I don't belong in Palestine? Why should it? We Khazars threw in our lot with the Jews and the Jews embraced us. Since then, we've also been Jews.

And who is we? Each of us has had many thousands of forebears, and each of those had many thousands in turn. The traces of millions of human beings are in our minds, our hair, our eyes and noses, our inner organs, the shape of our toes, our trillions of cells. By pure chance, two of these trillions are passed on unchanged and can be given labels like R-M117. Instructive as they are, we needn't make too much of them.

Life of a Salesman

A Story

Joseph Epstein

I WAS IN eighth grade and because it was raining that afternoon I didn't hang around the schoolyard playing softball as usual but came straight home. My mother was out shopping. The phone rang. "Is this the home of Marty Abrams?" a man with a gruff voice asked. I said Marty Abrams was my father, but he wasn't in at the moment. "Tell that son of a bitch that Jim Shanahan called," the man said, "and if he doesn't give me back my four hundred bucks for his piece of shit car, I'll kill him."

Just before dinner, I told my father about the call, leaving out the "son of a bitch" and "piece of shit" parts. He smiled.

"Aren't you worried about this guy's threat, Dad?" I asked.

"Nope," my father said. "I see it as a chance to take back the car and put him into an \$800 one."

This was in the early 1950's, which will explain the prices. What isn't so easily explained is my father's high spirits. In those days, they were invariably high. Had he gone to a psychotherapist, who knows, he might have been diagnosed as borderline manic. I myself think he was just an optimist. When he heard the word "no" from a customer, however emphatic or repeated, he took it only to mean "not yet."

My father never had more than fifteen cars

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scrunched into his 60-feet-across-the-front used-car lot on Broadway, between Thorndale and Ardmore. The office felt overcrowded with only him in it. He would have done OK except that he had no talent for keeping anything resembling careful books, let alone paying his taxes on time. If an irate customer wasn't calling, it was the IRS or the Illinois Department of Revenue. My father fended them all off cheerfully. He didn't live long enough to hear the phrase "no problem" come into vogue, but if he had he might have used it as a personal motto. For him, nothing seemed to be a problem.

He used to say that his best piece of luck was finding my mother. He adored her. She was beautiful and good-hearted, and, as I only later came to understand, had a wonderfully even temperament. He was always bringing home flowers and boxes of candy; she had a weakness for the chocolate-covered orange peels made in Chicago by the Dutch Mill company. With a pal named Izzy Levinson, who ran a pawn shop on the edge of the Loop, my father arranged complicated swaps that occasionally yielded diamond earrings or tennis bracelets or pearl necklaces. "Genuine simulated mother of pearl," I remember him once saying with a wink in my direction as he fastened a clasp around my mother's long and slender neck.

She loved him. He was good looking, with black hair and blue eyes, the graceful muscles of a former athlete—in his youthful glory days he'd played shortstop for Midland Motors in the Windy City

softball league—and a great smile and spirit of adventure. I never heard them argue. Who knows how many times my father's wild schemes, frequent job changes, and gambling nature sent her to bed filled with anxiety? But so far as I know she never complained. She listened raptly to his accounts of the cupidity and transparent slyness of his customers. She always spoke of him, in the way all husbands wish to be spoken of, with a combination of deep affection and unshakable respect.

WE LIVED in a one-bedroom apartment in a courtyard building on Sheridan Road, between Lunt and Greenleaf. My parents gave me the bedroom, and they slept on a studio couch in the living room. The small bathroom had a tub but no shower. Ida Kaplan, a sister of the former welterweight champion Barney Ross, and her husband Irv lived across the courtyard. A family named Glick, second cousins to the comedian Morey Amsterdam, lived in the apartment beneath us. A furrier named Max Fineman, who had a gap between his front teeth and a beaming smile, lived upstairs with his blonde wife Pearl.

In her late thirties my mother was found to have breast cancer. My father borrowed a few thousand dollars from friends and took her on a shopping spree—a vote of confidence that she would beat the disease. Max Fineman let him have a mink jacket at cost. My mother lived less than a year. Her last weeks were the first time I ever saw my father look defeated by life.

I was fifteen when my mother died. I won't go into the pain I felt. We never talked about this, my father and I, but I knew that his desolation couldn't have been less than my own. My mother's sister Florence and her husband Ben, a dentist, suggested that I come live in Highland Park with them and their two daughters, one my age, one five years younger. My father didn't go for it. He didn't much like his brother-in-law. "He's a safe player, your Uncle Ben. He's made a lot of dough, sure, but look what he had to do to get it. Dig around in people's mouths. He's a small-advantage man, the kind of guy who shifts his saving account from one bank to another in order to get a free electric blanket. I hope you don't ever come to think that's any way for a man to live."

Without my mother around, our life lost not only the softening feminine note but what we nowadays call structure, though we did keep to an odd regularity of our own devising. By now my father had given up his used-car lot and was working for an outfit called Royal Lumber, selling roofing,

siding, and garages, chiefly to Czech and Polish families on the far northwest side. Most of his calls were made in the early evening. He left me money to eat out or bring something home. On nights when he had no potential clients to see we had dinner together, usually at Ashkenaz on Morse Avenue, with its great clatter of dishes, talk of deals being made, and, on the wall, signed glossy photos of Shecky Greene, Jack E. Leonard, Shelley Berman, and Jerry Vale.

I suppose some people must have felt sorry for me. I missed my mother, a lot, but I also liked the freedom of being by myself most evenings. Besides, my father was usually home by nine-thirty or ten. Mornings he woke me for school, made breakfast, and sent me off with a peanut-butter-and-jelly or salami sandwich, a piece of fruit, and my allowance for the day. He put another bed in the apartment's single bedroom and we slept there together.

He did his best to keep up a respectable house-keeping standard. We made it a rule never to leave the apartment without making our beds; no dirty dishes were allowed to pile up in the sink for more than a day; a black woman named Emma Simpkin came in to clean every second Tuesday. I did the shopping, what little there was of it—orange juice, milk, bread, butter, eggs, canned soups and tuna, fruit, sandwich makings at Kroger's on Morse Avenue—and every five or six days I would run down to the basement to toss in a load of laundry.

When it came to school I was an uninterested student, and my father was an equally uninterested parent. He barely looked at the C's and occasional D's on my report cards before signing them. He had barely gotten through Marshall High School—he found it excruciatingly boring—and going to college in the teeth of the Depression was never a serious option. School was for dentists like his brother-in-law Ben or for what he called bullshit lawyers.

I waited up every night for my father to return from his calls and, as my mother must have done, sat with him while he ate and told me about customers or new leads. He had endless stories about the tricks salesmen would pull to close a deal. A guy named Wesley Demanos, for example, with whom he had gone to high school, was in the television repair business. He used to offer free roofing estimates, then, once up on the roof, his men would break the television antenna; the next day he would send a different salesman offering a low rate on new antennas. The name Wesley Demanos stuck in my mind; twenty or so years later, he turned up as the sole owner of the Milwaukee Bucks.

From my father's stories there emerged the picture of an amusing but slightly dangerous world. Sharks, wolves were out there; I mustn't let it frighten me, but I mustn't ever forget it, either. Proceed carefully, was his implicit message. Oddly, he never suggested that the world was divided between winners and losers and that I had better decide which I wanted to be. Nor did he brag about his own prowess as a salesman. It's possible, I suppose, that he really put the screws to some guy in a bungalow in Jefferson Park, or lashed a widow to five years of installment payments, or padded a bill on a black family in Brownsville. I don't really know; I prefer to think he never did.

HE DID talk a lot about the disorder, financial and otherwise, in so many of the lives he came in contact with. We talked about politicians (they were all crooks, some worse than others). We talked about money (very good to have, but plenty of things not worth doing for it). We talked about sports. He used to take me to the Golden Gloves at Marigold Arena, and one night we went to the Chicago Stadium to see Ezzard Charles quickly KO a local heavyweight with a glass jaw named Bob Satterfield. We had seats fifteen or so rows from ringside, and I remember how many of the old-timers seated around us seemed to know my father; most of them, remembering his softball days, called him Lefty.

One of the things my father and I never talked about was women. When I was sixteen, he said he assumed I was already too old for him to fill me in on the birds and the bees. "You know that old joke, don't you, Artie?" he said. As a salesman, he knew all the jokes. "It's the one where the Polish count is walking around his estate with his fourteen-year-old son. And he says to the boy that it's time he learned about the birds and the bees. 'You remember, André,' the count says, 'what we did last week with those two beautiful peasant girls we met on this path? You should know that the birds and the bees do it, too.'" That was it for the subject of sex, which was fine with me.

My father never spoke of the sadness or disappointments in his life, and only once, two or so years after her death, did he say he missed my mother. He was forty-one when she died. He was an attractive man. I had no idea whether he was seeing women; if he was, it must have been chiefly during the day, because he always came home at night and never failed to make my breakfast and see me off to school. Not that I would have minded; the subject just never came up.

I was in my senior year when, one afternoon, returning from school, I found a note from my father on the kitchen table. "Come to Miller's at 7:00. Someone I want you to meet."

Miller's was a steak house on Lunt and Western. Fred Miller, the owner, had sold furnaces and air-conditioning systems until he made enough to start a business of his own. He did so well that he bought this restaurant, which gave him, a bachelor, a place to go in the evenings to see his pals. A small man, bald, with rimless glasses, Fred Miller had what my father called "the touch." He used to bet the daily double, using combinations that added up to the number 13 and won a disproportionately large number of times. My father never showed the least envy of Fred Miller and his great good luck. Envy didn't seem to be in my father's make-up.

Miller's Steak House had a fine air of prosperity about it, its parking lot filled with Fleetwood Cadillacs, Buick Roadmasters, Chrysler Imperials, Olds 98's. My father's own taste ran to flashy cars. At the time, he was driving a year-old Oldsmobile Starfire convertible, with a red and white paint job.

As I came into the restaurant that evening, Marcy, the hostess, dark and sexy in an I've-been-around-the-block sort of way, showed me toward the back. There was my father, leaning across the table and talking very earnestly to a dark-haired woman, her chin resting in her hand, who seemed to be listening to him with amusement.

"Artie," my father said as I approached the table, "there's someone I want you to meet. Suzanne, this is my son Arthur. Arthur, meet Suzanne Chang."

"How nice to meet you," she said. "Your father talks about you all the time."

"Sit down, kid," my father said. "Sit down. We didn't order till you got here. Hungry, I hope."

Was this woman a customer of my father, now a salesman for something called SeeThrough Awnings? Her saying that my father spoke about me all the time suggested a longer acquaintance. Suzanne Chang looked to be roughly my father's age, somewhere, that is, in her middle forties. Her Chinese features were refined, elegant in a slightly severe way: high cheekbones, a solid chin, good teeth, small ears, black eyes that seemed not to miss much.

Before dinner, she grilled me lightly, like the steaks at Miller's. What was I studying in school? What was I reading? Did I know any foreign languages? ("Spanish," I said in answer to this one, failing to add that I knew it only at the level of *El burro es un animal importante*.) Where did I intend to go to college? What did I want to do with my life?

Until now I hadn't really thought very much about any of these questions. I assumed that I would go to college, maybe the University of Illinois at Navy Pier (Harvard on the Rocks, as the wiseguys called it) or possibly Wright Junior College. As for what I wanted to do with my life, I hadn't a clue. I said I thought I might become, like my father, a salesman. (His only advice to me on the matter of occupation had been to do something I loved, as he loved closing deals.) To my ears, everything I said sounded forced and unconvincing.

SHE WAS, I later learned, Mrs. Suzanne Chang, divorced, no children, the daughter of a man who in his day had had the license to sell all the Philip Morris cigarettes on mainland China. Her parents had sent her, their only daughter, to a finishing school in Geneva. When Mao and the Communists took over, her parents and her two older brothers were killed, and she was forced to evacuate to Taipei, where she lived with an uncle and aunt until her marriage. Following the divorce she lived in London for a while, then moved to Chicago and obtained American citizenship. She spoke an educated English without any trace of a Chinese accent.

Lest I look too crude, I did not order my usual that night at Miller's, the full slab of ribs; in front of Suzanne Chang, I didn't want to eat with my hands. Instead I had a strip steak and listened closely to make out what I could about the relationship between this woman and my father.

He did most of the talking, saying that he suspected he would soon need to find a new job. SeeThrough Awnings were selling well enough, but the place, my father felt, was badly run. The owner, a man named Morty Schulman, had begun to buy prize fighters, and guys from the Syndicate were occasionally spotted on the premises. The whole operation seemed very shaky.

Suzanne Chang was a salesman, too—of real estate. "You're really selling the women," I recall her saying. "The key is direct your attention to the men, but always watch the eyes of the women." My father said he thought real estate would be too slow for him; he preferred quicker action, bang, in and out, close that same night.

A woman with a natural formality, Suzanne Chang called my father Martin, a new one on me: to everyone else he was Marty or Lefty. She paid the most careful attention to everything he said. Although most of their conversation was mainly shoptalk, I wasn't in the least bored by it. After dinner the three of us walked out to the parking lot.

Suzanne Chang was tall, maybe 5'7", which, in her heels, made her roughly the same height as my father. He hugged her lightly before she got into a black Lincoln. "Good-bye, Arthur," she said to me. "I hope we shall meet again with a chance to talk much more." She blew a kiss to my father as she drove off.

Back in our apartment, my father and I went through our nightly ritual. We had some coffee, listened to the ten o'clock news, washed and dried the breakfast dishes. Only afterward, in our beds, with the lights out, did I ask, "What's with you and Mrs. Chang, Dad? Is she a business acquaintance, or something more?"

"Something more. Actually, she's a lot more. We're thinking about getting married, Artie."

"How come?" I asked.

"Because," my father said, "she's an attractive woman. She's very smart. And I think maybe it wouldn't be such a bad thing for the two of us to have the regular company of a woman. It'll civilize us a little, if you know what I mean."

At that instant I felt a gate close on our life together. I also made the decision right then to go away to school, to the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, where they had to take state residents no matter how poor their grades in high school. I didn't want to live with my father and Suzanne Chang, or with him and any other woman. I wanted him to myself, at least to the extent that I had had him to myself since the death of my mother. Let him see all sorts of women, sleep with the lot of them if he wanted, but I really didn't understand the need to bring one permanently into our lives.

"You all right with this?" my father asked in the dark. "I think you'll come to like Suzanne a lot. Give her a chance, kid."

"Sure, Dad," I said.

"Sleep well, kiddo," my father said. But I didn't.

ROUGHLY FOUR months later, in the study of a compliant Reform rabbi on Pratt Avenue, with me as best man, my father and Suzanne Chang married. The following day I went off to the University of Illinois and they took a two-week honeymoon in Hawaii. Earlier Suzanne had found a spacious three-bedroom apartment on Pine Grove, off the Drive, four or so blocks east of Wrigley Field. One of the bedrooms, Suzanne instructed me, was mine, to furnish exactly as I wished. I had helped them move into the new apartment and done my best at feigning pleasure in their happiness. I really wanted to like her, if only for my father's sake.

While I was away my first year at Champaign-Urbana, coming home only for Thanksgiving and Christmas and spring breaks, my father left SeeThrough Awnings and started a real-estate agency with his new wife. They opened an office on Fullerton, near Lincoln Avenue. Suzanne did the inside work, which meant the details, my father most of the actual selling. She must have taught him patience, because he soon became terrific at moving real estate. Occasionally, when an especially good thing came on the market, they bought it for themselves.

"*Tsigl*," my father said to me, "Yiddish for brick, kid. The old Jews used to say that brick, by which they meant real estate, was better than diamonds, cash, stock, or any other form of wealth. *Tsigl* remains *tsigl*. It stays in place. Everything else fluctuates."

Along with his work and his address, my father's wardrobe had also changed. He used to go around in slightly emphatic sport jackets, with gray trousers, tasseled loafers, colorful ties. Now he wore only gray or blue suits, white shirts, dark ties with subdued patterns, black shoes with a raised line running across the toe. He began having his nails manicured. When I remarked on his nails one night at dinner, he smiled and nodded toward Suzanne. "I'm under new management, kid," he said.

The two of them branched out from sales into management. When the owner of a 68-apartment building on Sheridan near Thorndale went bankrupt, they bought the building at a distressed price. This was the time in Chicago when condominium fever was kicking in, and after doing minimal rehab on the building they turned the apartments into condos and made out handsomely. They proceeded to buy two other large buildings—one on Marine Drive, the other on Cornell Avenue in Hyde Park—evidently making a nice bundle on these, too. Under his second wife's management, my father was becoming a wealthy man.

I WORKED HARD at my freshman-year classes, if only to avoid humiliating myself by flunking out. The feeling that failure would have made me seem disgraceful in Suzanne's eyes may, who knows, have been an added impetus. Next thing I knew, I found that I wasn't bad at school; I even enjoyed it. In my senior year I wrote a thesis in sociology with the title "The Ethos of the Modern American Salesman." The professor was so pleased by it that he offered to arrange a fellowship for me to stay at Illinois and do graduate work under his supervision. But I decided that I wanted to become

a high-school teacher, and I turned him down.

Home in Chicago was no longer an apartment on Pine Grove but rather a co-op on the tenth floor of 3920 North Lake Shore Drive, overlooking the Outer Drive and Waveland golf course. My father was more and more preoccupied with his deals.

Suzanne and I grew no closer, though we never argued. What I took to be her air of superiority began to get on my nerves. During semester break in my junior year, she had asked me what courses I would be taking in the spring semester. "Interesting," she said after I had told her, "but you know, when I was a girl of fifteen, in Switzerland, we read Montaigne, Molière, Montesquieu, Madame de Staël, Benjamin Constant. All in French, of course."

Suzanne and my father were no longer salesmen or managers but now officially known as developers. Along with rehabilitating old buildings and selling them as condos, they had put up a cluster of new houses in Buffalo Grove, one of the new suburbs beyond O'Hare airport, and another in the southwest suburb of Oak Lawn. The money, I assumed, was rolling in.

I was home less and less, but when I was around I noticed that my father talked a lot about stocks and Treasury notes and government bonds. He and Suzanne had a full-time maid. They were thinking of acquiring a large summer place on Lake Geneva in Wisconsin. Marty was now permanently Martin, and Lefty was long gone. I missed those guys.

When we were alone, my father and I still spoke about some of the same old things: the pennant race in the National League, or the Bears, for whose home games he had acquired excellent season's tickets. But his mind was elsewhere, or so I felt: in Buffalo Grove, maybe. No longer a man who took things as they came, he had become a man who checked the progress of his investments at the end of the day. Who knows, he may have gone off to sleep figuring his net worth, which by now must have been well in the millions. I had to wait until my twenties to acquire a father like everyone else's: a man distracted, concentrated on money-making, with less and less sense of the everyday adventurousness of life. I blamed Suzanne Chang for that.

In fairness, if my father was pulling away from me, so, without meaning to, I was doing the same from him. Around the time that my father and Suzanne acquired their townhouse on Astor Street, I rented an apartment in Hyde Park, on Dorchester, to be near the atmosphere of the University of Chicago, for I was thinking of going to graduate

school, and within striking distance of the high school where I was teaching history.

On a summer evening during a Shakespeare festival at the university's outdoor Court Theater, I spotted Suzanne with two other women. She introduced me as her stepson, always a cold word, I thought then and still do.

"My father with you?" I asked.

"He's at home," she said, adding, "*The Tempest* is not for Martin."

Sorry, but no *Tempest* for you, Dad, I thought. If my father was even aware of his wife's condescension, he didn't seem to mind. Much as I wished it were otherwise, I couldn't help recognize how much he loved this woman. She had channeled his energies, made him a rich man. But what he felt toward her wasn't anything like a debt. He was just pleased to be around her, pleased that she had chosen him for a husband. He was nuts about her.

I sometimes wondered if my father still thought of my mother, who loved him without qualification, and saw no need to put him under any management whatsoever. My mother was gentle and beautiful, while Suzanne was hard-edged and handsome. With her new wealth, she carried herself as if she were an empress; her name began to appear among the heavy contributors to local cultural institutions—the Art Institute, the Chicago Symphony. I began to think of her as Madame Chiang Kai-Abrams.

A YEAR OR so after this meeting, my father called to inform me that he had just received a diagnosis of prostate cancer, already in an advanced stage. I gulped when he told me. I didn't know what to say. My father always seemed invincible. Although I was seeing less and less of him, I wasn't ready to handle the world without knowing he was there in the background, ready if I needed him.

"Some things we need to talk about, kid," he said. When I asked if Suzanne would be along, he said, "No, just the two of us. How about tomorrow? You know the Tavern Club? 333 North Michigan. Noon OK?"

When I arrived the next day, a woman at the desk said that my father was waiting in the bar.

"How go things, kiddo?" my father said, coming forth to shake my hand. Not yet sixty, he was still handsome, still had a full head of dark hair, still carried himself well, with no sign of the deadly disease inhabiting his body.

"I'm fine, Dad," I said. "What about you? How're you feeling?"

"Apart from dying, I'm in pretty good shape," he said. "You know this joint?"

He gave me a brief tour, the best part of which was a room done in red wallpaper with, my father explained, two famously fake Matisse paintings on the entrance wall. I was a little surprised to learn that my father knew the name Matisse. The windows looked straight down Michigan Avenue to the north, with a grand view of the Wrigley Building, the Tribune Tower, and all the shops along what a real-estate operator named Arthur Rubloff once dubbed the Miracle Mile.

"Some miracle," my father said. "It's just about money, and money is no big miracle. Sometimes it isn't even a lot of fun. You always have to be watching over the goddamn stuff, making sure it's producing on its own, that someone isn't making a tenth of a percentage point more than you, which leaves you feeling like a schmuck. This is not a problem I expected to have."

"Most people would call it a happy problem, Dad."

"One of life's little surprises, kid. This cancer is only the latest. The way the doctors talk about it, it might also be my last surprise."

"The prognosis is bad?"

"Using my best high-pressure methods, I got the oncologist at Rush to handicap my chances of survival at 20 to 1 against. For Suzanne's sake I've agreed to put myself through the full chemo treatment. But what I really wanted to talk with you about now is money."

"It's not a subject I know a lot about," I said.

"Here's all you need to know: I'm holding, as they used to say at the race track when I was a kid. I'm a rich man, that is, Suzanne and I together are rich. At the moment we're rich mostly on paper. In the neighborhood of roughly \$25 million, but most of it tied up in development deals still in the works. I take it you have no interest in going into the real-estate business."

"None."

"You'll have to work all this out with Suzanne, 'cause if I die within the next six months or so it would be unfair to her and all that we having going on to pull out my half of the business to pay over to you. That's the way things are divided: half of what I'm worth goes to her, half to you. But it's all corporate and complicated, and you'll probably need a very smart and expensive lawyer to work through the details. Meanwhile, do I have your word that you'll be patient?"

"Of course. But I'd much rather you stayed alive than I get to worry about what to do with your money."

"I take it you're not too crazy about Suzanne,

even though she's the one really responsible for your one day becoming a rich man."

"It shows?"

"Never try to sell an old salesman, kid. Suzanne noted it right off. Her thought was that you didn't want her replacing your mother."

"Closer to the truth to say that I didn't want her to take you away from me. When she came into your life, I sort of dropped out of it."

"You never lost me, Artie. I'm proud of you, kid. I think, though, maybe you've been too tough on Suzanne. Cut her some slack. Remember that they murdered her family in China. She's been through a lot more than both of us put together."

"I've thought about all this, Dad, believe me I have."

"What she saw in me I still don't know," my father said. "But I'm glad she saw what she did. Without her, I'd probably be selling air-conditioning to Eskimos. I've been damn lucky in my two wives, Artie."

We went through the rest of our lunch together as if my father weren't being stalked by death. We talked about our food, about sports, even about his new business deals, as if a long future lay before him. He was making it easy on me, diverting me from the only subject that was on both our minds. On the street, I offered him a ride home, but he said he'd rather walk. We're not huggers, my father and I, and we didn't hug there on the sidewalk. We shook hands. He didn't have to tell me that he loved me, nor I that I loved him. We both knew.

"Stay in touch, kid," he said. He pulled up the collar of his double-breasted blue cashmere overcoat, belted in the back. He looked great in it, I thought, watching him walk into the wind as he crossed the bridge over the Chicago River.

THE NEXT day I called Suzanne at the office. "My father told me about his cancer yesterday," I said. "He also said he promised to undergo chemotherapy because you want him to. I'd be grateful if you released him from that promise."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because I love him," I said, "and I don't want him to suffer."

"I love him, too," she said, "as much as you do. I want him to live a lot longer. He is still not an old man, your father, and he is my husband."

"He tells me the odds are strongly against a cure."

"Whatever they are, they are better than nothing."

"Not if he has to spend his last days suffering."

"Forgive me," she said, "but I have another call I must take," and she hung up. Which I took to mean, Sorry, Charley, case closed, you lose. Thank you, Suzanne. Bitch.

My father went through a stringent regimen of chemotherapy and died in three rather than the five or six months he had mentioned at our lunch together at the Tavern Club. He had the death we all live in terror of, ending up hairless, weighing less than a hundred pounds, tubes stuck into him every which way, lying in a cold white hospital room attended by strangers. This particular tempest, I thought looking down on him, I wished Martin had been able to avoid.

Toward the end, the last week or so, Suzanne and I took shifts at the hospital—I during the day, she at night—sitting beside his bed. His final three days he was in a coma. On a sunny May afternoon, a Wednesday, a great closer was closed by an even greater closer. I called Suzanne at her office to tell her. She gasped, then I heard her begin to weep just before she hung up the phone.

At the cemetery, Suzanne and I stood together in the sunshine over my father's grave. Long ago he had acquired three plots: one for my mother, one for him, and one for me. Standing at graveside, listening to a rabbi who never knew my father intoning *kaddish*, I heard Suzanne sob quietly. This was the moment when I should have put my arm around her shoulder, or at least clasped her hand in mine, but I was unable to do either. She loved my father, I knew that, just as I knew he loved her. What did it matter what I felt about her?

As we left the cemetery, driving off in the funeral-home limo, I told her I wanted her to have the third cemetery plot, so that my father could be buried surrounded by the two women in his life he loved dearly. Sorry, Dad, I really wish I had been able to say or do more, but it was the best I could come up with.

ART

Owning the Past

Steven C. Munson

IN RECENT years, a number of American museums have become entangled in disputes with foreign governments over the ownership of certain very old objects—antiquities—held by the museums but originally retrieved from territory now under the jurisdiction of the complaining nations. The most highly publicized case involved the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and the government of Italy. It was resolved with the Getty's agreeing to return to Italy 40 ancient Greek artifacts—including a statue of a female deity purchased by the museum for \$18 million—that the Italians claimed had been looted from their own archeological sites. Other museums that have reportedly negotiated the return of holdings in their collections include the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Princeton University Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

The museums would seem to

STEVEN C. MUNSON's contributions to COMMENTARY include "Hopper's Appeal" (November 2007), "Rembrandt & the Artist's Touch" (March 2007), and "David Smith's Vision" (May 2006).

have little choice in such matters. Complaining governments can assert, correctly, that in demanding the return of certain objects, they are acting in accordance both with their own laws and with international conventions governing the trafficking in and recovery of a country's "cultural property." And of course American museums must rely on the cooperation of countries from which they wish to borrow works of art for their exhibitions. At the same time, museum officials themselves, apparently out of financial concerns and worries about their institutions' reputations, have adopted more restrictive guidelines on the acquisition of so-called "unprovenanced" antiquities—that is, those lacking adequate proof of having been legally acquired. Although the guidelines leave final decisions on such purchases to the individual museum, they would seem to reinforce the notion that such antiquities should be returned to their "source" countries.

These developments are clearly making life more difficult for American museums, and one man who is not happy about it is James Cuno, director of the Art Institute of

Chicago. He has written a book, inspired in part by his own experience, that dissects various international conventions and national cultural-property-retention laws, analyzes their negative effects, and decries the focus on unprovenanced antiquities.* I will return to Cuno's arguments later on, only noting here that his book helps to crystallize the question raised by controversies like the one involving the Getty: the question, that is, of who really "owns" these ancient artifacts, and to whom the heritage they represent belongs.

AS IT HAPPENS, the same question has been raised in a very illuminating manner by an exhibition lately on view at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.: *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*. This show is now in the middle of an international tour that began in late 2006 and will end in the fall of 2009. It has already been seen at three venues in Europe (Paris, Turin, and

* *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle Over Our Ancient Heritage*. Princeton, 256 pp., \$24.95.

Amsterdam) and is slated for three more in the United States.* One pair of contributors to the catalogue also express the hope that "at the time when the treasures . . . return to Afghanistan, conditions will allow them to be displayed permanently for all Afghans to see."

Given the ongoing violence there, this seems an unlikely prospect. But even if it does eventually become possible, one might wonder what Afghans who get to the Kabul Museum will make of this exhibition, since the objects in it seem much more related to the cultural heritages of other peoples than to their own.

These objects—some of which are quite beautiful and some of which are remarkably well preserved—come from four separate locations. The first, Tepe Fullol, is a site in northeast Afghanistan. There, in 1966, a group of farmers stumbled upon a cache of Bronze Age gold and silver bowls that they proceeded to chop up into pieces to divide among themselves. The arrival of local officials led to the recovery of five of the vessels as well as some fragments; several are in the show.

Investigation showed that the objects were part of a burial ground, that the decorative motifs of bearded bulls and a tree on a mountain on some of the artifacts were Mesopotamian, and that one cup fragment had a "stepped square" design that is frequently found on artifacts from Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Likewise, writes Jean-Francois Jarrige in a catalogue essay, a footed gold drinking beaker unearthed in Pakistan has a decorative frieze "showing beasts of prey . . . with the skin worked in exactly the same way as the wild bulls on the gold vessels from Tepe Fullol."

In short, as Jarrige states, the finds from Tepe Fullol comport with other discoveries in revealing a "cultural entity in various areas of Central Asia and the Indo-Iranian border regions" between 2500 and

2000 B.C.E., which reached "its zenith . . . when the Mesopotamian world . . . went through a period of economic prosperity." Correspondingly, when there was a break in trade, objects like the gold and silver bowls from Tepe Fullol "became scarce in the graveyards of Central Asia."

If the finds at Tepe Fullol ended up there as a result of regional trade, those from Ai Khanum, the second site, are primarily the products of that ancient city's predominant culture—which was the culture of classical Greece. Established around 300 B.C.E. by successors of Alexander the Great, Ai Khanum, writes the catalogue essayist Paul Bernard, was located on what is today the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border, in an area then called Bactria. Excavated by a team of French archeologists in the 1960's, it disclosed a rich history.

As part of their program to entrench Hellenistic culture in the region, the Bactrian-Greek rulers, Bernard writes, "stocked their palace at Ai Khanum with a collection of literary manuscripts, probably brought from the West." Although the parchments and papyri had long since disintegrated by the time the archeologists arrived,

the ink of the letters had been imprinted by pressure on the fine dust produced by the decomposition of the mud-brick walls. It was therefore possible to read, on clods of earth, some pages of a lost philosophical treatise by Aristotle, wherein he critically discussed Plato's theory of ideas. . . .

Just how important Ai Khanum was to the Greeks of that era was made clear by the discovery of the tomb of Kineas, who, Bernard tells us, "had been mandated to found the city." It seems that on a visit to the city, the philosopher Clearchus of Soli, a pupil of Aristotle, sought to ensure that its inhabitants would "keep to their Hellenic traditions" by having "a copy of the 150 maxims of wisdom, ascribed to the

famed Seven Sages of Greece, . . . engraved on a stele over the grave of Kineas." Two inscribed stone fragments from this stele can be seen in the National Gallery exhibition.

NO LESS interesting are the objects retrieved from Begram, located just north of Kabul. Among these are some of the most beautiful items in the show. They include Roman glassware, bronzes, and alabaster medallions, fragments of Chinese lacquer boxes and bowls, and Indian-style carved ivories.

The great variety of these artifacts, which have been dated to the first century C.E., gave rise at first to the notion that they represented an accumulation of an emperor's treasure. It is now thought they may be something more prosaic: the contents of a merchant's storeroom. The manufacture of the Roman glassware and bronzes has been traced to the Middle East. The geographical origin of the ivory objects is undetermined, but there is no question that the artistic style is Indian. As the essayist Pierre Cambon notes, it is a style marked by "freshness, inventiveness, and diversity; it reveals the work of a master's hand." Upon viewing the carved ivory plaques, female statuettes, and animal forms on pieces of furniture, some visitors may well think this an understatement of their intricate, lively, and rounded beauty. Cambon sums up by saying the objects found at Begram reveal a "fascination with the Greco-Roman civilization" while also pointing to "an Iranian culture with strong Hellenistic and Indian traditions."

Similar, and similarly diverse, origins characterize the objects from the fourth site, a place called Tillya Tepe in north central Afghanistan not far from the border with Turk-

* From the National Gallery, the exhibit will travel to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (October 24, 2008-January 25, 2009), the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (February 22-May 17, 2009), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (June 23-September 20, 2009).

menistan. These are some 20,000 pieces, mostly of gold and precious stones—the so-called “Bactrian gold.” They were unearthed by a Soviet archeologist in the late 1970’s, moved from one place to another during the years of Soviet occupation of the country, hidden away during the Taliban period, and brought to international attention in 2003.

Presented as the highlight of the show, the objects are mostly jewelry—earrings, bracelets, rings, pendants, clasps, amulets, anklets, and so forth. There are also gold cosmetic pots, hairpins, shoe soles, daggers, belt buckles, straps, medallions, headdresses, bowls, small figures, and other ornaments. In the words of Veronique Schiltz, writing in the catalogue,

[T]he art of Tillya Tepe is a mixture. There are Chinese objects or imitations, objects from India or those which reflect Indian traditions, and above all objects that follow Hellenistic traditions, . . . even more apparent in the style than in the thematic repertoire. . . .

Apart from the extraordinarily fine condition of these objects, the skill with which they were fashioned, and the fascinating quality things made of gold generally have, the most interesting question is: how did they get to where they were discovered, under a mound that went undetected for nearly 2,000 years? It seems that the nomads who roamed this part of the world at that time customarily buried their dead leaders under such mounds, and gold was not the only thing that went with them to the next world. As Schiltz explains, the skeletal remains of the nomadic prince interred at Tillya Tepe were surrounded by the remains of at least five females, all placed in a “premeditated hierarchical manner”:

It would be reassuring if this could be explained as the consequence of a bloody battle or an

epidemic, since the notion of five or perhaps even more women following their lord and master to their death is not terribly appealing. However, we know from Herodotus . . . as well as from various other excavations, that after his death a man did not go alone to the hereafter, but was accompanied by his “household.” . . . It is therefore quite possible, even probable, that we have here a leader accompanied in death by the womenfolk among his followers.

WHAT ARE we to conclude from the objects on display at the National Gallery? One great value of the exhibit lies in the glimpses it gives of the ancient kingdoms and empires that once held sway over parts of Central Asia, and in particular of the extensive trade routes that preceded the emergence of the network later known as the “Silk Road.” But its value also lies in showing how extraordinarily complicated the question of “cultural heritage” can be.

Indeed, perhaps the first thing to be noted about these objects is how unrelated they seem to anything peculiarly Afghan. Greek, Roman, Indian, Persian, Chinese—all of these influences seem not only obvious but largely determinative. In fact, the more one examines the objects, or delves into the highly informative essays that make up the bulk of the catalogue, the less it appears that we are confronted here with a question of “influence.” For there appear to be many actual examples of Greek, Roman, Indian, and other art from various time periods of the ancient past—examples excavated from territory that happens to be located within the borders of what is today Afghanistan.

That being the case, how relevant to the experience and history of today’s Afghans are these objects, left behind after having been carried from some place else or copied from other people’s creations? To those other peoples—Greeks, Italians, Indians, etc.—the artifacts might in

fact be much more meaningful today, establishing a cultural continuity between their present and their past. They might also mean something to those, especially in the West, for whom the classical age of Greece and Rome still resonates through its legacy of art and architecture, literature, science, and political philosophy; or to those with an interest in Indian or Chinese art; or to those for whom study of the ancient past holds intrinsic interest.

Afghans, to be sure, may be among these various groups. But it is difficult to see what in these objects they might find, *as Afghans*, to identify with, other than the fact that they are their country’s possession by virtue of the accidents of geography, trade, and territorial conquest by others—or, to put it another way, they may be most meaningful to Afghans because they show how important, historically and archeologically, the land now called Afghanistan has been over the centuries.

The exhibition, then, points to the multitude of different legitimate (and possibly competing) interests that may exist within the same heritage, and to the difficulty in many cases of giving a fully satisfactory answer to the question of who owns the artifacts that comprise such a heritage.

So how do we begin to address this question?

ONE WAY, blunt and simple in its logic, was given by the writer Dashiell Hammett in his famous detective novel, *The Maltese Falcon*:

“Then the bird doesn’t belong to any of you?” Spade asked, “but to a General Kemidov?”

“Belong?” the fat man said jovially. “Well, sir, you might say it belonged to the King of Spain, but I don’t see how you can honestly grant anybody else clear title to it—except by right of possession.” He clucked. “An article of that value that has passed from hand to hand by such means is clearly the property of whoever can get hold of it.”

This attitude, or something like it, may have once pretty much governed the acquisition and exchange of ancient artifacts. But such a *laissez-faire* approach has long since been deemed unacceptable by almost everyone from archeologists to the United Nations. Hence the focus on returning unprovenanced antiquities and the spread of restrictive national cultural-property-retention laws.

Which brings us back to James Cuno. In his view, such laws are often part and parcel of efforts to impose a tendentious interpretation of the ancient past, foster a sense of political legitimacy, and promote national prestige. By limiting access to ancient artifacts, they also interfere with efforts by scholars to pursue their research and by people generally to expand their knowledge of other cultures. Worse still, says Cuno, although the prevailing justification for these laws is that they will discourage the looting of archeological sites for profit, in fact they have failed to do so. In at least one country, moreover, they seem to have contributed to a growing business in the recovery and resale of "lost" antiquities.

That country is China, which makes a fuss about, as one Chinese official has put it, "enabling a large amount of cultural relics on the level of national treasures to return to their native place, putting an end to their wicked fate of wandering without proper shelter." But what happens to these treasures once they are returned to China? According to a report cited by Cuno, they "account for more than 50 percent of lots at domestic auctions, and 60 percent of total auction deals. By 2005, nearly 40,000 returned cultural relics had been auctioned to Chinese buyers." The result, Cuno writes, is that "private collections in China, including Hong Kong, are growing far more rapidly than public collections are enlarging."

As a museum director, Cuno is certainly right to be concerned

about the flow of artifacts out of the international market and back into a single country. Unfortunately, his point is one that seems to be lost on many museums, governments, and international organizations. It is also lost on archeologists, who, he says, are especially emphatic in arguing that such antiquities are "important to the identity and self-esteem" of the source countries and have ended up in foreign museums only because those museums are heirs "to an imperial and colonial past." The returning of unprovenanced antiquities is thus seen by some as a means of redressing presumed historical sins against the alleged former victims of Western rapacity.

Cuno does not shy away from rejecting this argument, or from giving the West the credit it deserves for having recovered so much of the world's ancient heritage and for preserving it in the great "encyclopedia museums" of Europe and America. Critics may contend that such museums merely rationalize "the transfer of cultural property from the Third World to the First," he writes, but the mere fact "that encyclopedia museums are primarily in the West" does nothing to discredit "the principle of their existence."

IN ARGUING his case, Cuno shows particular admiration for those individuals in the 19th and 20th centuries who pursued the "noble ambition" of building "collections of the world's artistic legacy." In her marvelous book on the Silk Road, the British historian Frances Wood gives us an idea of what such individuals went through.* She quotes, for example, from the account of Langdon Warner, who in late 1923 set out to retrieve some Buddhist wall paintings from the famed caves at Dunhuang in western China. At one point during their trek, Warner's companion, Howard Jayne, contracted severe frostbite in the "fantastically cold" weather and had to be left behind. Reaching Dunhuang alone, Warner wrote,

I grimly set about first to apply the colorless liquid which a Peking chemist had given me to fix the crumbling pigments, and later applied the hot glue-like bed to the paint itself. Here, however, were unexpected difficulties. The temperature in the caves was below zero. . . . Five days of labor from morning till dark and five nights of remorse for what I had done and of black despair, conquered with difficulty each morning, saw the fragments of paintings securely packed in felts and lashed tightly between flat boards, ready for the eighteen weeks' trip by springless jolting cart, railroad, and ship to the Fogg Museum at Harvard.

As Wood recounts, Warner's determination to retrieve the paintings was strengthened by the vandalism he encountered in the ancient caves, committed by "White Russian deserters, who had fled across the mountains and deserts in 1921, . . . been interned in the caves for six months, . . . [and] in their ignorance and boredom scratched their names on the walls," and by local worshippers, one of whom "strolled to the pictured wall and, in idle curiosity, picked at the scaling paint with his fingernails."

Elsewhere, Wood describes how the German museum official Albert von Le Coq, at a site near Turfan, China, in 1904,

was struck . . . by the damage already done and the continuing depredations of the local inhabitants. . . . The use of frescoes as fertilizer, the obliteration by Muslims of figure paintings, and von Le Coq's opinion that "The Chinese officials who govern the land couldn't care less about these ravages" . . . all seemed to provide justification for the removal to safety of documents and artifacts.

Such stories put the issue of cultural heritage into proper context,

* *The Silk Road: Two Thousand Years in the Heart of Asia* (2002).

making it clear that the biggest threat to "their" heritage has often come from people in the "source" country itself, not from outsiders who have sought to acquire part of that heritage for display in a museum where it could be both maintained and made available for study.

THIS RAISES an issue that Cuno addresses but whose implications he does not fully draw out—namely, the role of modern nationalist feeling in the formation of positive attitudes toward the ancient past. As he writes, it was the Egyptians' rediscovery of their ancient past in the late 19th century (thanks to earlier scholarship by Europeans) that led to the emergence of "Pharaonism," an intellectual movement that redefined Egyptian identity by "adding thousands of years to what the Egyptians knew about their own history" and introduced "a new kind of history-teaching" in schools that took in a vastly wider sweep than the conventional Arab/Muslim periodization. This movement, Cuno writes, helped bolster Egyptian separatism within the Ottoman empire and encouraged newfound cults of antiquity in other Middle Eastern countries (even as it also aroused the ire of Islamic fundamentalists).

Yet Cuno apparently does not notice the paradox inherent in these developments. For the very same "nationalism" that has led various countries to adopt more restrictive policies concerning the sharing of ancient archeological finds has also helped them to preserve (in however flawed a fashion) both those finds and associated intellectual discoveries from the potentially destructive ill will of their own extremists.

The fate of the two giant Buddhas carved out of sandstone cliffs at Bamiyan, Afghanistan, illustrates the opposite impulse—as well as the lengths to which some will go in order to destroy part of a cultural heritage they do not like. Historically, as Frances Wood explains,

The area had seen considerable

waves of devastation. Islam had arrived. . . in the 8th century but it was not until the reign of Mahmud (998-1030) that the sculptures were first deliberately attacked. . . . The town of Bamiyan was completely destroyed and its inhabitants massacred by Genghis Khan in 1221. The area was also subject to earthquakes but the Buddhas, knees upwards, survived all these until March 2001. . . .

The advent of the Taliban, she writes, "precipitated the uncompromising destruction of cultural monuments that had stood for hundreds of years." And not only the Buddhas were lost: the "contents of the museums of Kabul and Kapisa were scattered," along with other Silk Road treasures representing "the legacy of a two-thousand year odyssey, embracing the caravanserais of nations and a stream of missionaries, explorers, and adventurers." The scale of "this kind of cultural annihilation," Wood observes, "takes the breath away. It is too potent a reminder of the caprice that governs (and has always governed) our knowledge of the past."

THE NATIONAL GALLERY exhibit is itself the result of a determined effort to save as many of these treasures as possible from the Taliban. The Afghans involved in the effort to rescue them—from their own countrymen—acted with genuine heroism and, whether they realized it or not, in a spirit similar to the one that motivated men like Langdon Warner and Albert von Le Coq. Perhaps their example points the way to a general approach to the question of who owns the past.

This is really two questions: one about the literal ownership of artifacts and one about the cultural heritage they represent. To Cuno, who tends to conflate the two, the answer is that the artifacts of antiquity do not belong to any one nation or people or government, but to everyone; they are the heritage of all mankind. Therefore, they should be made

available for museums to acquire so that they can be shared with the widest possible number of people. In particular, the goal of his book is to revive interest in the concept of "partage," under which, decades ago, certain non-Western governments, in exchange for the help they needed from Western archeologists and museums in carrying out excavations, agreed to allow the museums to keep some of the finds from those digs for themselves.

How realistic such an idea is in light of current trends is hard to say. In principle there is much to recommend it, not least because, when all is said and done, Westerners have tended to serve as the best and most disinterested custodians of the world's ancient heritage. But this suggests in turn the relevance of the character of the governments that are today demanding the return of antiquities. Cuno tends to lump these together, too. But it is one thing for an American museum to return artifacts to Italy, for example, and quite another to return them to a non-democratic country like China. The former is not likely to be using such objects to rewrite the past, or to be denying access to them for political reasons, while the reliability of the latter on such points might very well be questioned.

Indeed, shortly after resolving its dispute with Italy, the Getty Museum borrowed numerous works from that country for a major Bernini retrospective. At the same time, reports Cuno, a British Museum loan for a 2006 exhibition in China did not include any Chinese objects; the Chinese evidently refused to allow them because doing so would have implied recognition of British ownership.

As for the heritage of the ancient past itself—as opposed to the objects in it—perhaps one might say, based on the example of the Afghan rescuers of the Kabul treasures and their Western predecessors and current collaborators, that it belongs to those who would honestly lay claim to it.

Unless one is a government, or a museum, or a collector, this is ultimately more a matter of attitude, of a certain state of mind, than of actual material possession. As Frances Wood points out with regard to Central Asia, the fascination of the West with the East "was as much a matter of imagination as of trade, and perhaps more." Illustrating the point, she quotes the lines of the early-20th-century writer and diplo-

mat James Elroy Flecker, lines that seem especially relevant to an understanding of what a shared cultural heritage means:

We travel not for trafficking
alone
By hotter winds our fiery hearts
are fanned,
For lust of knowing what
should not be known
We make the Golden Journey
to Samarkand.

If today such traveling is subject to all the safety and efficiency of tourism, for better and worse, it is also true that, thanks to exhibitions like that at the National Gallery, museums like James Cuno's, and histories like Frances Wood's, one does not need actually to go to a place like Samarkand in order to satisfy, at least in part, one's "lust for knowing what should not be known."

MUSIC

The Heroine Who Wasn't

Terry Teachout

BYOND THE making of art, what can we or should we expect from great artists? In particular, do their gifts excuse them from the ordinary ethical responsibilities of other human beings? Or should they be held to generally accepted standards of conduct—if not higher ones? No matter how self-evident the answers to these questions may seem, history proves them to be less obvious in practice.

In the case of music, no historical event has been more telling in this regard than World War II. While some well-known European musicians responded with integrity to the rise of the Hitler regime, far more collaborated more or less willingly with the Nazis. And now that historians have begun to apply stricter scrutiny to the wartime conduct of European artists, it is becoming evident that most—including some whose conduct was once

thought impeccable—were opportunists who behaved no better than they had to.

Into which camp did Lotte Lehmann fall? Born in Prussia in 1888, Lehmann was one of a handful of non-Jewish German musicians to choose emigration over collaboration with the Nazis, moving to America and remaining there after the war. It has long been taken for granted that her decision to abandon her European career was both principled and courageous, since, from 1916 until the *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, she was one of the Vienna State Opera's most popular singers. But her story turns out to have been more complicated than it looks, and Michael H. Kater tells it with well-informed candor in *Never Sang for Hitler: The Life and Times of Lotte Lehmann, 1888-1976*.¹

Kater, a professor of history at York University in Toronto, is the author of two previous books, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich* (1997) and *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits* (2000). Both cast a cold eye on the wartime conduct of the classical musicians of Nazi Germany, and his

new book, which is the first primary-source biography of Lehmann, is very much in the same vein. For while Lehmann was no Nazi, neither was she an anti-Nazi. Kater leaves the reader in no possible doubt that she emigrated for reasons that had nothing to do with idealism—and everything to do with money.

LEHMANN is less well known today than she was at the time of her death in 1976, when her great career was still a living memory in America. Throughout the middle part of her life, however, she was as famous here as she had been in Europe. Because she was not filmed in her prime and left behind no full-length commercial recordings of any of her operatic roles, her legendary prowess as a stage actress must now be taken on faith. But she recorded extensively between 1914 and 1949, and these performances add ample flesh to the bare bones of her reputation.

A “heavy” lyric soprano whose voice was more warm than brilliant, Lehmann was never known for the

TERRY TEACHOUT, COMMENTARY's regular music critic and the drama critic of the Wall Street Journal, recently finished writing *Rhythm Man: A Life of Louis Armstrong* and *The Letter*, the libretto for an opera by Paul Moravec. He blogs about the arts at www.terry-teachout.com.

¹ Cambridge, 394 pp., \$35.00.

security of her high notes. Instead she opted for sincerity over showiness, singing with a heartfelt quality that Kater nicely describes as "soulfulness enhanced by chastity." Though her repertoire ranged widely in her youth, she came to be closely identified with three German roles: Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Sieglinde in Wagner's *Die Walküre*, and the Marschallin in Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. All were ideally suited to her emotional inclinations (if not her vocal limitations), and her interpretations of these roles helped make her one of the most noted classical singers of her day.²

Success came early to Lehmann. She signed her first opera-house contract in 1910, just six years after beginning her musical studies, and two years later Strauss invited her to perform in the premiere of the revised version of his *Ariadne auf Naxos*. From then on she moved from triumph to triumph, aided by the patronage of Strauss and of Bruno Walter, who not only conducted many of her stage performances but also accompanied her in recitals.

But while she was naturally bright, Lehmann's modest background—her father was a low-level Prussian civil servant—had not prepared her to move in such exalted circles. Nor was she quite attractive enough to make up for her lack of social and intellectual poise. In Vienna, such commodities were at a premium, and for all her fame, Lehmann's *petit-bourgeois* habits of mind caused her to be ill at ease in the city where she had won her fame.

THE CRASSNESS of Wilhelmine Germany suited Lehmann better. When the Third Reich eventually beckoned, she made it known that she could be had—at a price.

In April 1934, Hermann Goering summoned her to Berlin and offered her a lucrative contract with the Berlin State Opera. According to Lehmann herself, he also offered

a villa, a large pension, and a riding horse if she would agree to sing exclusively in Nazi Germany. As she told the story, Goering then sent her a contract that made no mention of "all the extravagant promises." Unwilling to give up singing in America or in her "beloved Vienna," she declined the offer, after which Goering sent her a letter "full of insults and low abuse" and banned her from performing in Germany. Later on, she said, the Nazis renewed their suit, but by then "my eyes had been opened to their crimes."

Such, at any rate, was the version told by Lehmann and her publicists, and no one privy to the details of what had actually happened came forward to contradict them. Later on she embroidered the tale still further, claiming that she was "a fanatical anti-Nazi" whom, when she refused to sign on the dotted line, Goering accused of having "a Jewish junk-dealer's soul."

Alas, not much of this pretty story is true, as Michael Kater discovered in the course of researching *Never Sang for Hitler*. In fact, by the time Goering approached her, the Depression-wracked Vienna State Opera had cut the high-living soprano's salary significantly and reduced the frequency of her appearances. Far from being opposed to Hitler, she was already performing so frequently in Germany that her Jewish friends chided her for her insensitivity. And the real reason her deal with Goering fell through, it turns out, was that in addition to her promised salary she asked for too many fringe benefits, including a six-room apartment in Berlin. Nor had Goering insisted that Lehmann sing only in Germany: To the contrary, he expected her to perform in other countries as an artistic ambassador of the Third Reich.

As soon as Lehmann understood that she had gone too far, moreover, she backpedaled, attempting to reopen negotiations by assuring Goering in a telegram that "my purely

idealistic, artistic conception of my life's work is, and always has been, to carry German art into the whole world." But he ignored her entreaties, and once it became clear to Lehmann that she would henceforth not be welcome in her native land, she started telling foreign journalists that she was no longer willing to sing in Germany "as it was today." And yet even after the *Anschluss* she went out of her way to request that the Vienna State Opera pension her off (which it did) rather than resigning from the company in protest, and it is clear that she would not have hesitated to accept Goering's offer had it been sufficiently generous.

BY THEN Lehmann had moved her base of operations to America. There she engaged a shrewd publicist, Constance Hope, who succeeded in establishing her as a popular celebrity. Not only did Lehmann sing at the Metropolitan Opera House, but she also became a frequent guest on *Kraft Music Hall*, Bing Crosby's radio show, and made the cover of *Time* in 1935. The *Time* story is a period piece that says much about the way in which Hope marketed her as a democratic diva:

Toscanini attends all her recitals. She is Bruno Walter's favorite singer. . . . Lehmann's ways are unpretentious. She keeps no maid, answers her own telephone, does her own mending. Five years ago she was definitely large. Now 20 lbs. thinner, she watches her diet, never orders dessert.

That Lehmann was believed to have defied the Nazis served her well during World War II. "Like

² *Lotte Lehmann: Opera and Lieder* (Pearl GEMM CDS 9234, two CD's) is a wide-ranging collection of recordings made by Lehmann between 1927 and 1942 that includes excerpts from *Fidelio*, *Die Walküre*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, and other operas. Though out of print in the U.S., it is still available in England and can be ordered directly from www.amazon.co.uk.

Bruno Walter and other world-famous artists," Kater writes, "she enjoyed the incalculable advantage of having been a brand name *before* Hitler's coming to power." The willingness of the American media to swallow her tale of standing up to Goering earned her much good will among American music lovers—and she put it to use. As advancing age forced her to give up one after another of her demanding operatic roles, she shifted her focus to the recital stage, winning critical plaudits as a specialist in German art song and publishing two valuable books about vocal interpretation, *More Than Singing* (1945) and *My Many Lives* (1948).³ An attempt to repackage herself as a Hollywood actress proved unsuccessful, however, and in 1951 Lehmann retired from public performance to spend the rest of her life teaching in California, where she worked with such singers as Grace Bumbry and Marilyn Horne.

Though Lehmann spoke English with a thick accent and remained aloof from most aspects of American culture, the uncomplicated directness of American manners appears to have suited her far better than Vienna's elaborate urbanity, and her later years were for the most part happy ones. She visited Europe after the war to teach a few public master classes, but mainly she stuck close to her new home and to

the Music Academy of the West, the conservatory in Santa Barbara she had helped to found in 1946 and at which she taught voice for the rest of her active life.

MICHAEL KATER's interests in *Never Sang for Hitler* are more socio-historical than musical. Still, it is surprising that he has so little to say about the records that are now Lehmann's main claim to fame. Since most of these performances are now out of print in this country, it is difficult for younger listeners to get to know the singing of the woman whom the British vocal connoisseur J.B. Steane described as "immensely alive, strong and intelligent as well as warm, tender and charming—perhaps after all as complete a human being as we have come to know through records of great singers."

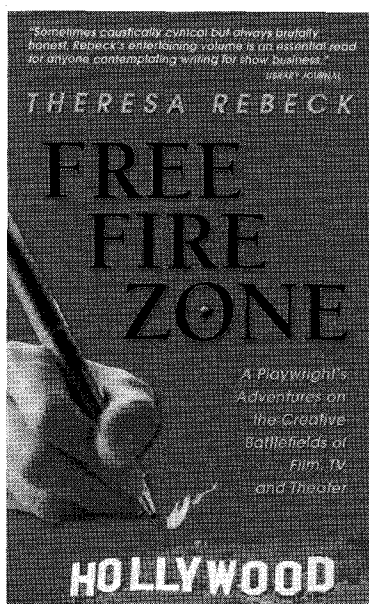
It remains to be seen whether Lehmann's records will be as esteemed by tomorrow's music lovers as they were in her lifetime and for many years afterward. Tastes in singing are subject to changes in fashion, and the matronly warmth that was her trademark is no longer as popular as it once was. While one cannot dismiss the near-universal testimony of the critics who described her as a singing actress beyond compare, the abridged *Rosenkavalier* that she recorded in 1933 is not nearly so striking as reviews

of her live performances might lead one to expect.⁴

But even if Lotte Lehmann herself should not continue to be so highly regarded in the 21st century as she was in the 20th, *Never Sang for Hitler* will remain valuable as a cautionary tale, not merely for artists who make the mistake of thinking themselves above the common run but also for anyone who idealistically believes that the ability to make great art endows the maker with superior moral perceptions. Even the greatest of artists are capable of behaving abominably and then lying about it afterward. Whatever the ultimate effect of the experience of beauty may be, no one who reads *Never Sang for Hitler* could ever again suppose that it infallibly ennobles the soul.

³ After 1935, Lehmann recorded only art songs, including the major cycles of Schubert and Schumann (the latter accompanied by Bruno Walter) and many individual songs by Brahms, Strauss, and Wolf. A six-CD series of reissues of her complete American recordings has been released in Europe by Naxos and can be ordered in the U.S. from www.norpete.com (Naxos 8.111093/97 and 8.111244).

⁴ The Marschallin's first-act monologue from *Rosenkavalier* can be heard on *Lotte Lehmann: Opera and Lieder*, along with two lengthy excerpts from the abridged *Walküre* that Lehmann recorded for EMI in 1935 with Lauritz Melchior and the Vienna Philharmonic under Bruno Walter—to my mind her finest achievement on record.



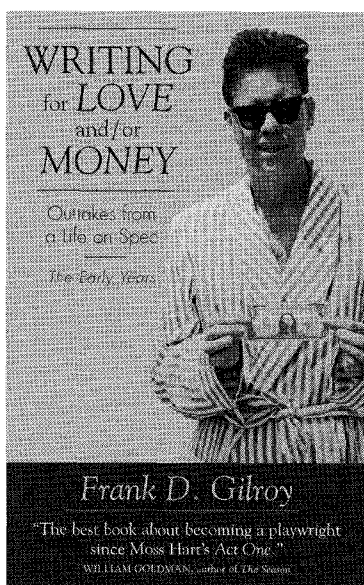
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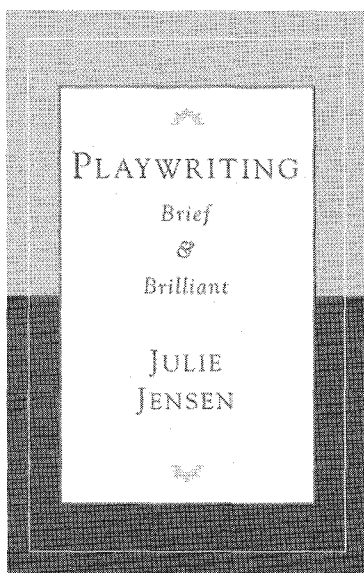
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Books in Review

To Be Oneself

Defending Identity: Its Indispensable Role in Protecting Democracy

by Natan Sharansky
with Shira Wolosky Weiss

PublicAffairs. 304 pp. \$26.95

Reviewed by
David Pryce-Jones

A FEW RARE individuals bring alive the drama of the times in which they live, and one such is Natan Sharansky. Born in the Soviet Union, he was programmed to be another cog in a system designed to eliminate every identity, whether political or religious or nationalist, that could challenge Communism. He might well have settled to be a Homo Sovieticus if he had not rebelled early on, becoming active in the movement of human-rights activists and dissidents whose best-

DAVID PRYCE-JONES, *the British novelist and political analyst, is a senior editor at National Review. His Betrayal: France, the Arabs, and the Jews, is out in paperback from Encounter Books.*

known representative was the physicist Andrei Sakharov.

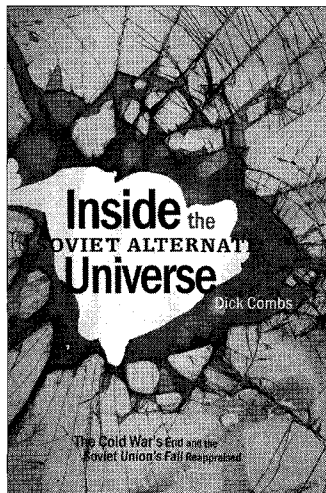
But it was the Six-Day war of 1967 that truly transformed the young Sharansky by bringing into relief his Jewish identity, and with it Zionism. Refusing to allow him to emigrate to Israel, the Soviet authorities treated him as a traitor and in 1978 sentenced him to the Gulag, where he was imprisoned for nine long years. In the attempt to extract a confession that would have justified its persecution of him, the KGB threatened to put him before an execution squad. His spirit of resistance grew steadily stronger. To the watching world, the international struggle between freedom and tyranny was perfectly embodied in the fate of this dissident *par excellence*. Indeed, in retrospect he has made the case—only a little overstated—that he and others asserting their right to be themselves were the major cause of the collapse of Soviet Communism in the late 1980's and early 90's.

Once he was at last safe and free in democratic Israel, Sharansky conducted himself in a similarly stubborn and often dissenting style. Celebrity gave him an entrance

ticket to the roughhouse of Israeli politics, and his talents brought him into the cabinets successively of Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon. Both these prime ministers, he came to believe, were making concessions to the Arabs that endangered the state of Israel, and he duly resigned high office twice.

A WAR OF ideas is currently in progress in the world. The war has several fronts: the proper relationship of the citizen to the modern state; the proper relationship among states of differing ideologies; and, in particular, the confrontation between the liberal democratic West and radical Islam. Israel happens to be a laboratory for experimenting with these questions, and where the balance of power ultimately reached with the Islamic world is a matter of life and death.

In this war of ideas, Sharansky stands in the front line. His first book, *Fear No Evil* (1988), a memoir of his imprisonment in the Gulag, is in effect a celebration of a victory now receding into history but pertinent nonetheless. *The Case for Democracy* (2004) argued that authoritarian systems by their nature



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lead only to oppression and war; it follows that the prerequisite for stability and peace in the world, and particularly in the Arab and Islamic world, is democracy. This was a conclusion that President Bush, in his initial approach to al Qaeda and Iraq, had reached for himself, and Sharansky became a welcome and supportive visitor in the White House.

For Sharansky, democracy is synonymous with freedom. The idea may sound commonsensical, but it is rejected by whole ranks of foreign-policy specialists, the so-called realists, who are convinced that Muslim and other societies have a history, a culture, and a social system that make them impervious to democracy and freedom, dooming them to long-term if not eternal absolutism. Further ranks—of multiculturalists—actually encourage absolutism on the grounds that this is how Muslims and Arabs have always handled social and political issues and how they have remained immune to problematic Western values. Such multiculturalists see nothing condescending or pessimistic in thus consigning other people so helplessly to a frequently violent fate.

Defending Identity, Sharansky's latest book and a kind of sequel to *The Case for Democracy*, is a forceful challenge to the fashionable throng of realists, multiculturalists, post-modernists, and the like. Democracy and freedom, according to Sharansky, are evidently too weak on their own to protect the citizen. In the modern state, another ingredient, identity, is indispensable to their success.

Classically, identity in Sharansky's sense has depended upon a shared nationality, culture, and language, and has been embodied in the nation-state. Marxists were the first to play fast and loose with the concept. To them, as Sharansky explains, the nation-state was only a way station on the road to the revolutionary triumph of the proletariat, whose true identity lay not in their homeland

but in their class. According to Marxist reasoning, nations that advanced the anticipated proletarian victory were considered to have a "good" identity, while those that impeded it were "bad." A nation might be switched from one side of the ledger to the other as the progressive politics of the moment dictated.

The horrors of the 20th century seemed to confirm that identity and nationalism were indeed bad, and in fact the causes of war. Bertrand Russell uttered a popular opinion, even a truism, when he observed that "Few people can be happy unless they hate some other person, nation, or creed." In a telling syllogism, Sharansky captures the now generally accepted case: "Identity causes war; war is evil; therefore, identity causes evil." The solution to this evil is therefore to transcend identity, if not nationhood itself, and build a global society that will put an end to war, conflict, and exploitation.

THE UNITED NATIONS and the European Union are only two among other supra-national bodies that aspire to suppress national identities altogether. In each case, however, the sacrifice of identity has done nothing to enhance democracy. Quite the contrary. In identity-weak Europe, millions of Muslim immigrants have been encouraged by the tenets of the regnant multiculturalism to cultivate exclusively *their* faith, customs, and culture. As a consequence, they do not enter the public space along with other communities.

Sharansky draws the contrast with the United States, where particular identities coexist in a system that protects the rights of all while valuing the common life. In the European conception, it would seem, one can embrace democracy or identity but not both; in the American, democracy and identity support and strengthen one another. "Democracy without identity invites war," Sharansky writes; "identity

without democracy guarantees it.”

Deep in that lapidary formulation are the springs of the growing differences, verging on hostility, between the United States and Europe. In a chapter that is perhaps unexpected though consistent with his views, Sharansky criticizes those European countries that ban the veil for Muslim women. Culturally but not politically significant, the veil is the sort of assertion of identity that he approves of, and one that can be accommodated without disturbance by a democratic society that has its own strong sense of identity.

EXPERIENCE OF the Gulag solidified Sharansky's sense of identity, as well as the steadfastness that derives from it. While the KGB was trying to instill in him the fear of death, he had to learn to survive without compromising himself morally. Although he had been brought up knowing very little about Jews or Judaism, identity for him became intimately connected with a new and illuminating awareness of being a Jew. It meant becoming a link in a chain stretching back to the past and forward to the future; it meant living a life “more meaningful than our mere physical existence.” The more he was persecuted, the more important it became that he should live up to his place in Jewish history.

There was still more to it. His supporters and kindred spirits in the Gulag were often people with whom he had nothing in common except the fact that they had identities as strong as his. For that reason, he could trust them, too, to stand up to the KGB without breaking. He mentions a Latvian nationalist, Pentecostals, and one devout Orthodox Christian who happened to harbor anti-Jewish prejudices until he and Sharansky came to share a cell. It was obvious to all of his Gulag comrades, Sharansky writes, that they could be true to themselves only in a society in which nobody was punished for expressing his views. The passion for identity and the passion

for democracy were interwoven tightly enough to be indistinguishable.

Turning to Israel, Sharansky recommends that the country take this same conclusion to heart as the only way out of its existential plight. During its early years, Israel was widely regarded as a “good” nation because it fit the approved progressive image of the moment, having put right the sins of Europe and incidentally ended a passage of British imperial exploitation. But the same 1967 war that gave him his Jewish identity and fired his Zionism was also the war that left Israel responsible for the Palestinian Arabs and their territories.

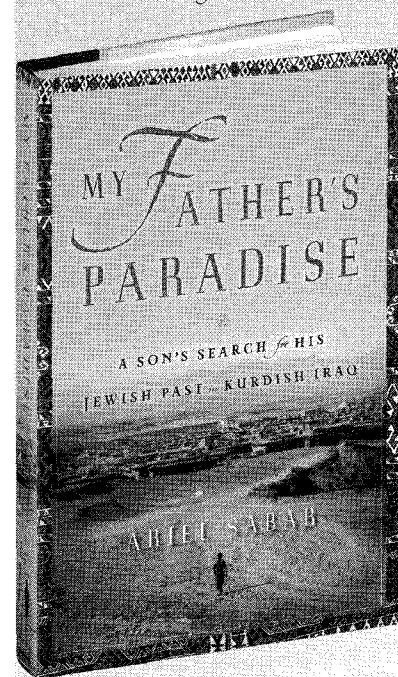
By the time Sharansky reached Israel, a number of influential critics within the country and elsewhere around the world were already exhorting it to resolve its moral and political dilemma by abandoning its Zionist identity. Here and there, he points a finger at some of these critics, including Edward Said, Eric Hobsbawm, Ilan Pappé, and Tony Judt. For these soldiers on the opposing side in the war of ideas, post-modern equals post-Zionist: Israel need not and should not be an explicitly Jewish state but a “state of all its citizens,” or perhaps not even a state at all. By continuing to insist on its self-definition as a Jewish state, Israel has slipped definitively onto the ledger of “bad” nations—just another colonial exploiter and on the wrong side of history. By the same token, Palestinian nationalism is by definition “good,” though nobody troubles to explain quite why.

Sharansky might have coined a slightly different syllogism: identity causes war; Israel has a strong identity; therefore, Israel causes war. This expresses an irrational animus that is at floodtide in progressive circles. There is a word for the animus, as Sharansky does not hesitate to add, and that word is anti-Semitism.

SHARANSKY's opponents in the war of ideas would no doubt reply that

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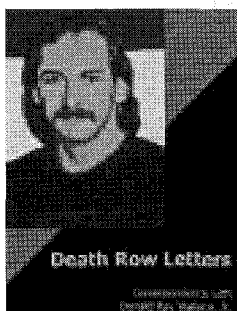
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it is too late in the day, too anachronistic, to be waving a Zionist flag. His final riposte is to remind us that "the enemy's will is strong because his identity is strong." Al Qaeda and Hizballah and other Islamists are perfectly capable of drawing their own conclusions about the power of identity, and in the name of it are more than happy to foster hate against other nations and creeds.

In a revealing little anecdote toward the end of this book, a Palestinian terrorist in an Israeli prison confides to a visiting journalist that he has observed one of the guards eating bread on Passover. When asked why he was flouting Jewish tradition, the guard explained that he felt no obligation to events that took place over 3,000 years ago. On the basis of this exchange, the terrorist is convinced that the Palestinians have only to go on pressing their fight in order to achieve all their goals, because the nation opposing them has lost its connection to its roots.

That is exactly what Sharansky is fighting to prevent, and not just for the sake of Israel, while the war of ideas hangs in the balance.

Big Think

The Post-American World

by Fareed Zakaria

Norton. 288 pp. \$25.95

Reviewed by
Abe Greenwald

SINCE THE end of the cold war, historians, economists, and political scientists have undertaken a feverish quest to define the global dynamic. In 1992, perceiving no

ABE GREENWALD is assistant online editor of COMMENTARY and writes regularly for its group blog contentions.

world view to challenge Western-style liberal democracy, Francis Fukuyama wondered whether the end of history might be in sight. By 1996, conversely, Samuel P. Huntington thought an imminent clash of civilizations would soon return states to their traditional condition of active rivalry. Since then, a stream of books has described the end, or the beginning, or the restoration of economic and foreign-policy challenges to the West in general and to the United States in particular—with, most recently, a sub-genre of titles suggesting nothing less than the demise of America itself as a civilization.

It is into this environment that Fareed Zakaria has stepped with his best-selling book, *The Post-American World*. For a decade or more, the forty-four-year-old Zakaria has been establishing himself as his generation's foreign-policy celebrity. Born in Mumbai, he moved to the United States to attend college at Yale. After receiving his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1993, he rapidly became the managing editor of *Foreign Affairs* and published several well-regarded books before ascending to his current lofty perch as international editor of *Newsweek*. Flattering profiles of him, which have abounded over the years, suggest he is certain one day to serve as Secretary of State.

How, THEN, does the nation's second most popular foreign-policy pundit (after Thomas Friedman) address the most popular line of foreign-policy argument in the post-cold-war period—namely, American decline?

To Zakaria, the globe is now experiencing its third "tectonic power shift" in 500 years. The first came in the 15th century, with the creation of the West as we know it. The second occurred in the 20th century, when the United States became a superpower. Today, Zakaria writes, we are living through "the rise of the rest," with the nations of

the non-Western world now asserting themselves as rivals to and potential replacements of the American superpower. The world, Zakaria says, is moving “from anti-Americanism to post-Americanism.”

The engine of post-Americanism, in Zakaria’s view, is swift economic progress in places other than the U.S.:

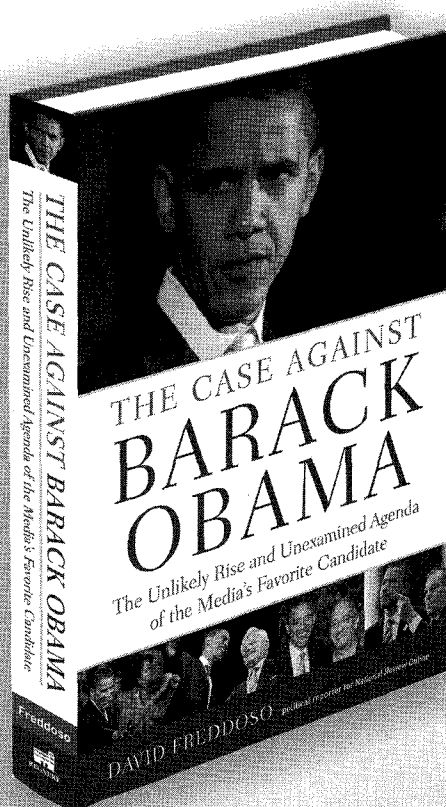
Over the past few decades, countries all over the world have been experiencing rates of economic growth that were once unthinkable. . . . This growth has been most visible in Asia, but is no longer confined to it. . . . In 2006 and 2007, 124 countries grew at a rate of 4 percent or more.

As these sentences suggest, Zakaria’s sweep is global; but his primary focus is on the rise of China and India. In the former, Deng Xiaoping’s reforms have led to an unchecked hyper-growth that threatens to take up larger and larger shares of global GDP while cutting the United States out of important markets. Easing China’s rise in this respect has been the fact that, unlike the U.S., it is not hampered by humanitarian concerns. Beijing’s apolitical approach to international relations has facilitated lucrative business partnerships with non-democratic states, like Sudan, that are only too happy to be relieved of the human-rights and anti-corruption restrictions attached to offers from more scrupulous powers.

If China is, in Zakaria’s term, “the challenger” to American dominance, India is “the ally.” A deliriously pro-American country, India has succeeded in revolutionizing the arts of managerial strategy and entrepreneurship. Now an outsourcing behemoth, it is, second only to China, the world’s fastest-growing economy. If there is a hitch in this success story, it is, writes Zakaria, that “India’s growth is taking place not because of the government but despite it.” The country’s ethnic and cultural diversity keeps national

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mandates bogged down in conflict, with the result that Delhi approaches its looming large-scale problems at a snail's pace. Still, there is no gainsaying the capitalist dynamo that is the country's private sector, or the challenge that it, too, presents to American dominance.

IN OUTLINING the rise of "the challenger" and "the ally," Zakaria em-

plays his facts meticulously and to illuminating effect. Of China, for example, we learn that it manufactured 200 air conditioners in 1978 and 48 million in 2005; that its exports to the U.S. have shot up 1,600 percent in the last fifteen years; and that it had 28 billion square feet of space under construction in 2005, five times the figure for America in the same year. Of India, we learn

that revenue from the auto-parts business went from under \$6 billion in 2003 to over \$15 billion in 2007, and that, uniquely among developing nations, a full half of India's GDP comes from services.

When, however, he comes to asking how the United States has responded or should respond to these developments, Zakaria's analytical demeanor deserts him. Tacked on to his scrupulously fact-based survey is a kind of pamphlet retailing a litany of charges, some of them Zakaria's own, against American arrogance and unilateralism.

Thus, of the current U.S. President we are told:

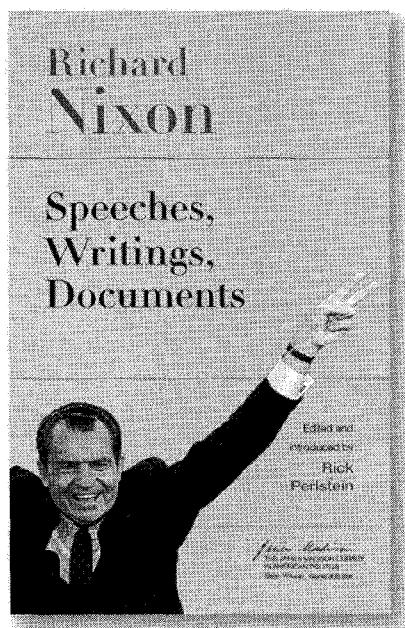
For several years, the Bush administration practically boasted of its disdain for treaties, multilateral organizations, international public opinions, and anything that suggested a conciliatory approach to world politics.

We are also treated to a confirming quotation from Christopher Patten, the European Union's former commissioner for external affairs:

Attending any conference abroad, American Cabinet officers arrive with the sort of entourage that would have done Darius proud. Hotels are commandeered, cities are brought to a halt; men with bits of plastic hanging out of their ears. It is not a spectacle that wins hearts and minds.

Unfortunately, Zakaria declines to offer a single supporting reference to a treaty scorned or multilateral body disdained. Nor is he any more forthcoming in his characterizations of non-official American attitudes. He declares, for example, that "Americans take justified pride in their own country—we call it patriotism—and yet are genuinely startled when other people are proud and possessive of theirs." Really? Americans, awash in pluralism and cultural relativism, are startled to discover that other nations

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prize their indigenous cultures? In the 21st century?

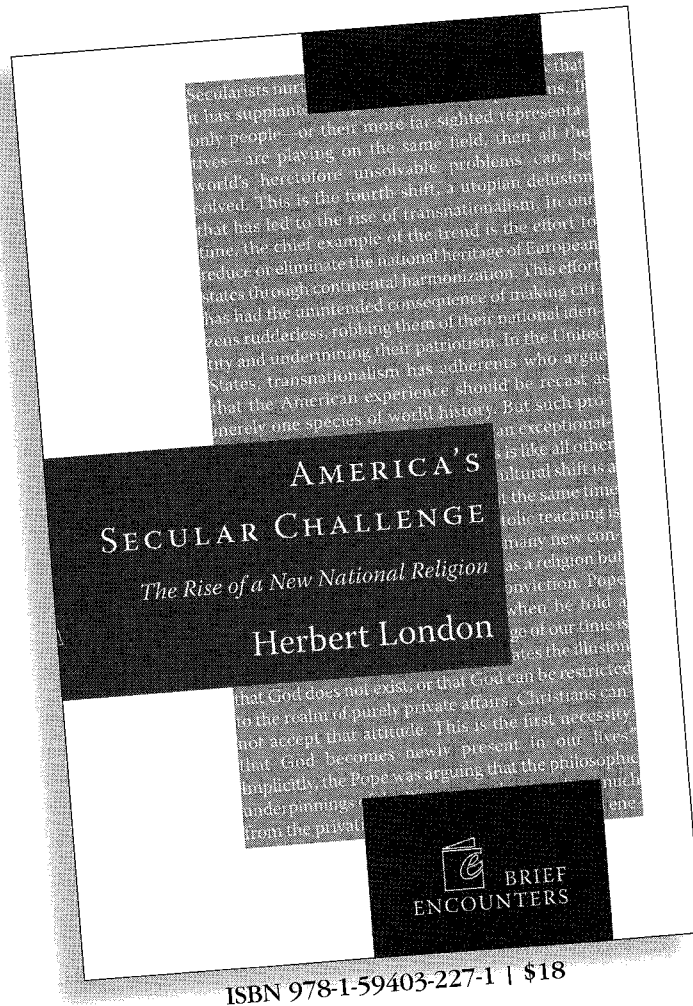
AS CURIOUS as all this is, it becomes downright mysterious when Zakaria brings himself to discuss America's actual economic performance. In his introduction he asserts flatly that although, "at the politico-military level, we remain in a single-superpower world, . . . in every other dimension . . . distribution of power is shifting." And yet, whenever specific data about America appear in *The Post-American World*, they tell a very different tale.

The World Economic Forum, Zakaria notes, ranks the U.S. as the most competitive economy on the planet. In demographic terms, America is ahead of other Western states and even ahead of China, its population remaining at replacement level while the others are running out of the human capital needed to support their aged and retired. Our universities are strong: "With 5 percent of the world's population, the United States absolutely dominates higher education." In the hottest new industries—nanotechnology and biotechnology—the U.S. is far ahead of everyone else. And so forth.

True, as Zakaria points out, America has fallen behind in the yearly global percentage of major IPO's, those lucrative conversions of private businesses into publicly traded corporations. But even here he gamely acknowledges that a fair portion of the shift can be explained by the one-time privatization of state-owned companies in Europe and China. Indeed, after all the data stacked in the U.S.'s favor, the only two palpable examples of the edge achieved by "the rest" are that citizens of other countries are conversant in more languages than we, and enjoy better cell-phone service.

So toothless does the existential threat suggested in the book's title become with each passing page that Zakaria himself is compelled to warn the reader against seeing the

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threat as imminent. China, he rather startlingly pronounces at one juncture, "is unlikely to surpass [the U.S.] on any dimension—military, political, or economic—for decades, let alone have dominance in all areas."

Is it this conclusion, so at odds with his stated thesis, that drives Zakaria to take refuge in snobbery and Bush-bashing? At the end of this

volume, after hectoring us to desist from our unlettered and aggressive ways, he reverses gears yet again, advising us to face the future calmly and to "stop cowering in fear."

Thanks; we needed that.

In the Image

Dictation: A Quartet

by Cynthia Ozick

Houghton Mifflin. 179 pp. \$24.00

Reviewed by
Abraham Socher

IN A REVIEW almost a quarter-century ago of Saul Bellow's *Him With His Foot in His Mouth*, a book of five short stories, Cynthia Ozick asked:

Does there come a time when, out of the blue, an author offers to decode himself? Not simply to divert or paraphrase, or lead around a corner, or leave clues, or set out decoys (familiar apparatus, art-as-usual), but . . . spill wine all over the figure in the carpet . . . and disclose the thing itself? To let loose, in fact, the secret? . . . The cumulative art, concentrated, so to speak, in a vial.

Now, at a similarly late stage in her career, Ozick has collected four stories of her own, "a quartet," as the subtitle of her new book has it, and one is tempted to ask the same question. Has Ozick offered to decode herself?

Perhaps—though it should be noted that it was never clear that Bellow's one true subject, his "secret," was, as Ozick claimed, "the Eye of God." Ozick is, like Bellow, known as a Jewish writer, but unlike Bellow (who once criticized Isaac Bashevis Singer as "too Jewy"), she has not resisted the label or dismissed it as social happenstance. To the contrary, the question of what it means to write as a Jew has always been at the center of Ozick's work.

Her first published short story, "The Pagan Rabbi" (1966), depicts a rabbinic scholar who tells his chil-

ABRAHAM SOCHER teaches Jewish studies at Oberlin College. He contributed "No Game for Old Men" to our March issue.

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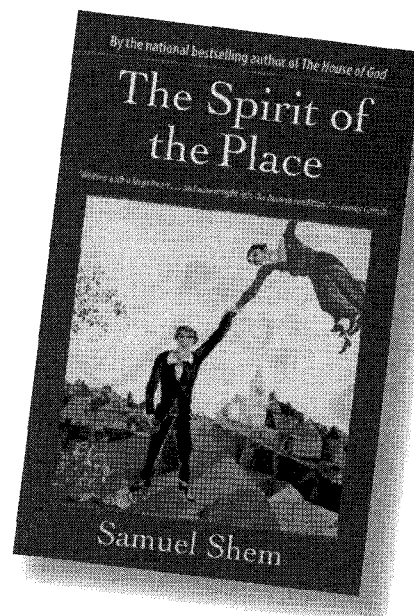
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dren fantastic tales, comes to worship nature, and, in a fit of despair and ecstasy, ends up hanging himself from a tree with his *tallit* (prayer shawl). The central character of her most successful novel, *The Cannibal Galaxy* (1983), is a Jewish educator whose great ambition is to lead a school that marries the best of the Jewish and classical traditions; he fails. Ozick's most recent novel, *Heir to the Glimmering World* (2004), manages to be at once about a figure very much like Christopher Milne, the unhappy model for his father's "Winnie the Pooh" stories, and about the medieval Jewish heresy of Karaism, which rejected rabbinic commentary in favor of biblical literalism.

IT HAS, in short, been Ozick who, of all Jewish American writers, has been most concerned with God and His demands. Not the "God-idea," or ecstatic spiritual experience, but the biblical God of Sinai Who announces Himself as utterly unique and prohibits the worship of anything else or its image "in the form of the heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth."

Is art, then—the image-making and image-worshiping activity par excellence—a violation of God's command? Is art idolatrous? This conundrum underlies Ozick's fiction and has inspired some of her most incisive criticism, including in the pages of COMMENTARY. Her answer would appear to be a tough-minded yes, with the caveat that the conundrum is also inescapable. Art for art's sake *is*, in Ozick's judgment, the worship of images, lumps of inert clay or heaps of mere words. But writers and artists necessarily come to the beauty of the created world late, and in their rapture cannot help wishing to usurp the primal creativity, rivaling God and proclaiming their human handiwork very good. For a Jewish author, one who aims to be not just ethnically but theologically Jewish, the only

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recourse—and it is but partial—is to make his art moral.

Critics have sometimes treated the relationship of Ozick's iconoclastic criticism to her own fiction as theory to practice, charging her with inconsistency. As if, Ozick once tartly noted, the essays provided "chalk marks . . . to take the measure of the stories." A better approach is to read both Ozick's fiction and her essays as composed out of the selfsame tension between the monotheistic ban on idolatry and the desire to usurp God by creating beauty. In *Dictation*, this theme is distilled, "concentrated, so to speak, in a vial," despite the fact that its best stories are not ostensibly about Jews or Judaism at all.

At 47 small pages, the title story "Dictation," is not really, as the publisher's jacket copy has it, "a novella." It has more of the static,

schematic subtlety of an allegory. Set in England at the turn of the 20th century, it tells (or rather makes up) the story behind the very proper, slightly tense relationship between the novelists Henry James and Joseph Conrad. James is, for Ozick, the unexcelled genius of the art of fiction. But this compliment, as we have seen, is bound to be ambivalent. Indeed, she has told the story of her own artistic maturation as an escape from James's influence, and described her first novel *Trust* (1966) as a Jamesian failure, though arguably it is neither.

In the opening scene of "Dictation," a nervous, unproven Conrad—he has not yet published *Heart of Darkness*—visits James, already "the Master," in his London flat. There, Conrad sees a startlingly impersonal new instrument, the Remington typewriter through which James writes:

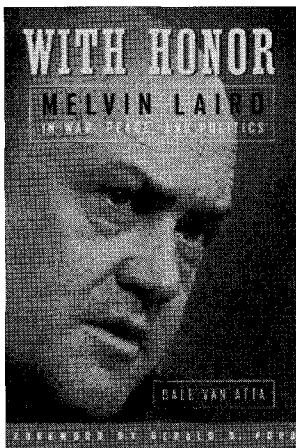
On a broad surface reserved for it in a far corner . . . stood the Machine . . . headless, armless and legless—brute shoulders merely: it might as well have been the torso of a broken God.

Later, thinking about James, Conrad muses that "the Master's cosmopolitanism, his civilized restraint, his perfection of method, his figures so finished, chiseled, and carved, were, when you came down to it, stone."

If a pagan sees gods everywhere, Ozick sees idols. James's "figures," his characters, are potential idols precisely because they are too perfect: the flesh of character so finely delineated that it becomes bloodless stone. The typewriter is likewise an idol because it intervenes between the creator and the created, mystifying the creative process.

James had hired an amanuensis or typist "who recorded in shorthand James's dictation and then transcribed it on the Machine; but it soon turned out to be more efficient to speak directly to the thing itself, with [the typist] at the keys." A decade later, Conrad would have his own typewriter and typist, a fragile, besotted young woman named Lillian Hallows, and the two writers, unbeknownst to each other, would both be working on *doppelgänger* tales: Conrad on "The Secret Sharer" and James on "The Jolly Corner," about a man who confronts the ghost of the person he might have been. Inevitably, though each of their employers intuitively disapproves, Hallows meets her opposite number, James's amanuensis Theodora Bosanquet, an altogether more forceful character.

In "Dictation," Ozick has created an elegant hall of mirrors: two authors, two typists, two stories, each about a protagonist and his double, and, finally, two passages of prose, one by Conrad that is almost Jamesian and another by James that sounds almost like Conrad. Out of this delirious twinning Miss Bosanquet, who is described at one point



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as an "idolatrous healer," contrives her own elegant plot for immortality, something halfway between a literary prank (another bit of secret sharing) and a diabolical usurpation.

This is, in short, a brilliant variation on Ozick's fundamental theme of art as idolatry. But does it work as a story? Here and elsewhere, Ozick dazzles more than she engages. Neither Conrad nor James really comes alive, their own figures seeming not so much chiseled stone as characters in a PBS costume drama. The allegory can be decoded—Bosanquet the usurper is to James as James is to God, and so on—but the plot fails, finally, to satisfy.

THE THEME of art as usurpation, or secret sharing, is also at the center of "Actors," the second story in the collection, featuring a mediocre television actor named Matt Sorley ("born Mose Sadacca") who attempts to re-create the histrionic grandeur of a Yiddish actor of the old school only to be vanquished by a kind of ghost. But the real twin of "Dictation," and the other immensely ambitious story of this collection, is "At Fumicaró."

The story's protagonist, Frank Knight, is a middle-aged Catholic journalist who attends a conference in Mussolini's Italy, before America has entered the war, on "The Church and How It Is Known." The conference is just as boring as it sounds, and yet it, or rather Knight's failure to attend very much of it, changes his life. Upon arriving in his room, he has found the teen-aged chambermaid retching over his toilet. "In four days," Ozick writes, "she would be his wife."

Knight sees her at first not as a suffering human being or even as an object of desire but as a beautiful object:

The woman went on vomiting. . . . Watching serenely, he thought of some grand fountain where dolphins, or else infant cherubim, spew foamy water from their bottomless throats. He saw her

shamelessly: she was a solid little nymph. She was the coarse muse of Italia. He recited to himself, "If to any man the tumult of the flesh were silenced, silenced the phantasies of earth, water, and air, silenced, too, the poles."

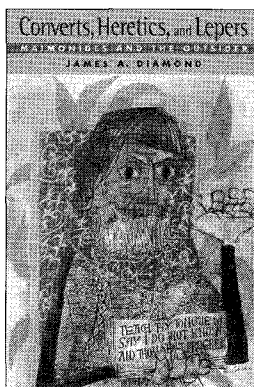
The passage in quotes is, oddly, St. Augustine's attempt to describe the abstract beauties of heaven to his dying mother, and yet within two hours Knight has seduced this teenager, who is in fact already pregnant (hence the nausea).

Knight's first image of his future wife is as carved stone. But, to his chagrin, it is she who is "in thrall to sticks and stones"—ready to pray, it seems, almost anywhere and to almost anything: a decayed bit of Roman statuary on the roadside, which she insists on addressing as Saint Francis, kitschy icons of Jesus and the Madonna whose vividness is

"*molto sacro*," museum pieces, and, in the final scene, the endless "saints and martyrs and angels and gryphons and gargoyles and Romans" at the top of the Milan cathedral. It is here that Knight has an epiphany concerning the consequences of idolatry that he finds both hilarious and humiliating. "You could be up here," he said—now he understood exactly what had happened at Fumicaró; he had fixed his penance for life—"a thousand years!"

OZICK'S OEUVRE is not exhausted by the question of idolatry. Even in this collection, the story that rounds out the quartet, "But What Happened to the Baby?" does not really fit the pattern. It is also, as it happens, the least successful of the four stories: a dark joke about Esperanto in the Catskills with an O. Henry twist that doesn't quite carry narrative conviction.

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Nonetheless, if any writer has a grand metaphor, a secret, the thing itself at the center of the maze, it is Ozick. That ineffable thing is God, or, more precisely if also more negatively, the fact that nothing in this world, no matter how beautiful, *is* a god.

Modern Jewish thought may be said to have begun with Moses Mendelssohn's argument at the end of the 18th century that Judaism remained valid and still necessary in the world of the Enlightenment as the religion that rejected all idolatries. With a little license, one could say that modern Jewish literature began at the outset of the 20th century with Saul Tchernikovsky's Hebrew poem, "Before the Statue of Apollo," which laments that same rejection. Even when she is not entirely successful, Cynthia Ozick is, alone among the major Jewish American writers, a conscious heir to both traditions.

The Young & the Amnesiac

The Dumbest Generation:
How the Digital Age
Stupefies Young Americans
and Jeopardizes Our Future
(Or, Don't Trust Anyone
Under Thirty)

by Mark Bauerlein

Tarcher. 272 pp. \$24.95

Reviewed by
Kay S. Hymowitz

MARK BAUERLEIN is well aware of the dangers of his chosen genre, instances of which are frequently and sometimes rightly shrugged off as so much alarmism. Unlike other authors of what's-

KAY S. HYMOWITZ, a contributing editor of *City Journal*, is the author of *Liberation's Children and Marriage and Caste in America*.

the-matter-with-the-kids polemics, Bauerlein does not accuse the young of immorality, or slovenliness, or poor manners. Instead, as befits a professor of English at Emory and a former director of research at the National Endowment of the Arts, he targets the *intellectual* life of the cohort now commonly known as the Millennials.

Many observers have marveled at and cheered this group's creativity and technological know-how. Bauerlein thinks they're just plain dumb.

IN SUPPORT of his thesis, Bauerlein offers a torrent of evidence. He cites the segment on the *Tonight* show in which Jay Leno asks passersby, almost all of them young, questions of basic knowledge that most sentient Americans could answer. Where does the Pope live? Who made the first electric light bulb? (Answer to number one: Paris, England. To number two: Thomas Edison "with the kite.") Among the innumerable national surveys attesting to millennial dimness, he mentions, for example, one 2003 study that found fully 64 percent of fifteen-to-twenty-six-year-olds familiar with the name of the latest American Idol but only 10 percent capable of naming the Speaker of the House of Representatives. In a 2004 analysis, only 28 percent of a similar age group could correctly identify William Rehnquist as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, while a mere 15 percent knew who Vladimir Putin was. And so forth.

Skeptics object to complaints of this sort in two ways. First, they say that Americans have *never* been able to name the Chief Justice (or for that matter to explain basic chemistry). In reply, Bauerlein points to real signs of decline in the survey literature, adding that, in light of today's armies of popularizers, even stable levels of basic knowledge would be pitiful.

The second objection, which comes from educators and cognitive scientists, is that what matters is not

factual knowledge but, in the words of the Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner, "the more generative capacity to 'do history' and to 'think historically.'" Bauerlein roundly rejects this as well. Gardner's "division of basic facts from higher-order thinking," he writes, is utterly fallacious: "If you don't know which rights are enumerated in the First Amendment, you can't do very much 'critical thinking' about rights in the United States."

Besides, Bauerlein notes caustically, the Dumbest Generation appears to be expending precious little energy "thinking historically"—or civically, scientifically, or aesthetically. Today's students spend more time in school than did earlier generations; at their disposal are more museums, public libraries, and art galleries. They can pick up free newspapers at every corner, and can hang out at airy book stores with venti lattes and comfy chairs. Yet they do not seem terribly interested in any of these cultural resources. As opposed to the four hours of TV watched by the average college student every day, a 2003 survey shows Millennials reading a mere eight minutes a day. The Harry Potter craze? It was just that—a temporary phenomenon, like the Hula Hoop, that in no way signaled improvement in youthful reading habits.

CRITICS HAVE an answer to all this, too, and Bauerlein addresses that answer in some detail. Young people may not be reading books, the argument goes, but they are reading their computer screens. In fact, the computer is a better teacher than books. According to some technophiles, the Internet, with its blogs and wikis and its "nonlinear strategies of thinking," has turned youngsters into interactive "content creators" and savvy—a favorite adjective—citizen reporters. Some enthusiasts, like Steven Johnson in *Everything Bad Is Good for You*, believe that the computer makes it possible for children to learn even when they

are playing, since video games "force you to make decisions" and to "create . . . order."

Bauerlein acknowledges the evidence, such as it is, behind such assertions, and in particular the recent jump in average IQ's. But he is not buying any of it. For one thing, tests of eye movement suggest that people "read" a computer screen differently from a book, scanning and jumping around and engaging the meaning of a text only superficially. For another, most of what youngsters read on the screen is at a sixth-grade level, and there is little sign that they are seeking out intellectual content; young people's familiarity with national and international affairs continues to rank below that of their less computer-savvy elders. When it comes to IQ's, moreover, the largest increase has occurred in the area of spatial reasoning among those at the lower percentiles, while scores in vocabulary, math skills, and cultural knowledge have not risen much at all.

Exposed to a carnival of multimedia input from infancy, young people may be "mentally agile," Bauerlein writes, but they remain "culturally ignorant." Still, are computers the main culprit here? Only to some extent, according to Bauerlein, who regards them less as a cause than as an enabler. The real guilty party is a society that has willfully forfeited its commitment to acculturating the next generation. Young people are no longer asked by their elders, as they once were, to "mute the voices inside them and heed instead the voices of distant greatness." Instead we empower their own natural egotism.

The worst offenders of all are our educators and intellectuals. Bauerlein quotes a distinguished professor of Renaissance literature:

Look, I don't care if everybody stops reading literature. Yeah, it's my bread and butter, but cultures change. People do different things.

Despite the one-third dropout rate of freshmen who have gone straight to college out of high school, and the presence of remedial-learning centers on every campus and in the offices of corporate America, even the president of the National Council of Teachers of English has insouciantly aped the notion that today's illiterate young are really "expert users of many and varied forms and technologies of literacy."

The consequence of this "betrayal of the mentors," concludes Bauerlein, is not simply a generation of nincompoops who cannot name the Chief Justice. It is a depleted public life, a diminished democracy, and an all but lost cultural heritage.

The Dumbest Generation suffers from some of the familiar faults of the jeremiad. It can be repetitive in

both tone and substance. In its zeal, it sometimes asks more of the evidence than the evidence can bear. And, though Bauerlein persuades us that the Millennials are indeed dumb, his argument that they are setting records on that score is less convincing: after all, American anti-intellectualism and the baleful effects of the media have been perennial targets of complaint. Finally, many readers will find themselves thinking of young friends or family members whose intelligence and curiosity defy Bauerlein's gloom; even if the actual number of such bright-eyed youngsters may be small, it is surely not insignificant.

That said, however, *The Dumbest Generation* presents an elegantly written and important challenge to the techno-evangelism now seeping into American culture and education. If anything, Bauerlein understates the claims of the futurists,

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technologists, and pie-eyed educational consultants. Many of these are more than advocates of computer learning; they are utopians, for whom the Internet portends a new age of unprecedented innovation, creativity, and civic energy, perhaps even a new human type.

Clay Shirky, author of the recent *Here Comes Everybody*, contends that the turn from television (passive) to the Internet (active) is yielding a "cognitive surplus," a superfluity of hitherto untapped collective brain power. So many busy minds, other techno-utopians conclude, will inevitably lead to breakthrough solutions to the problems of pollution, famine, or AIDS.

As if all this mass cleverness weren't enough, the Internet also promises "social transformation," enabling citizens to bypass conventional power structures and undermine the influence of the corporate media not only by exposing distortions and omissions but by substituting a pure outsider journalism uncontaminated by elite bias. Douglas Rushkoff prophesies the coming of "open-source democracy," on the model of software, like Wikipedia, developed by networks of motivated individuals. The globalized collectivity and interdependency thereby engendered will eventually go so far as to overthrow "competitive individualism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, and particularism."

The kernel of truth in all this web-spinning is enough to keep the seers in business. But the vital insight of *The Dumbest Generation*—and one completely forgotten by technophiles—is that competent citizens are made, not born. An empowered mob of ill-educated cultural amnesiacs—even, or especially, those capable of encoding software—is exactly the sort of danger the founders sought to counter when they created the institutions of our republic. Maintaining a vibrant democracy is not the same as writing a Wikipedia entry; it is not even the same as voting. It requires

actually engaging the tradition that created the freedom and prosperity we enjoy every time we click onto our Internet browsers.

That engagement is what, with cause, Bauerlein worries will become lost in our computer-dominated, youth empowered, attention-deficit-disordered culture. If this sounds alarming, it is.

Their Honor, and Ours

Retribution: The Battle for Japan, 1944-45

by Max Hastings

Knopf. 656 pp. \$35.00

Reviewed by
Algis Valiunas

NEVER REALLY prepared for war, America has always hated the thought of going to war, even in the outraged enthusiasm for vengeance following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. By contrast, imperial Japan had only contempt for Americans as a nation of shopkeepers concerned principally with their material comforts, lacking the will for a decisive fight, and displaying an unseemly fear of violent death—though the Japanese measured our weakness not against traditional Western models but against the honor of the samurai warrior.

The obsession with honor would entangle the Japanese in ruinous imprudence, the British journalist and author Max Hastings writes in his estimable new history. *Retribution* is a worthy sequel to his previous books on the war in Europe (including *Overlord*, about the Allied

ALGIS VALIUNAS writes about politics and culture. His article about the Allies' air campaign in World War II, "Fire From the Sky," appeared in the July-August 2007 COMMENTARY.

invasion of France, and *Armageddon: The Battle for Germany*). Having gone into war with the expectation of a swift victory, and having enjoyed triumph after triumph in the early going, Japan was recklessly slow to realize the war was lost and, once it came to that realization, continued to believe that there remained a way of losing advantageously. As the war neared its end, a fanatical sticking point in the negotiations for surrender, especially for some in the military, was the demand to preserve native political arrangements, including the imperial throne occupied by a descendant of the sun god.

Nothing could have been more greatly to Japan's disadvantage than such fantasies. As Hastings writes:

Japan's human catastrophes were crowded into the last months of war, when its fate was sealed, during the futile struggle to avert the inevitable. . . . In the last phase, around two million Japanese people paid the price for their rulers' blindness, a sacrifice which availed their country nothing. After years in which Japan's armies had roamed Asia at will, killing on a Homeric scale, retribution was at hand.

HASTINGS LEAVES no doubt that Japan deserved what it suffered at Allied hands, and that Japanese atrocities were of a fouler moral order than even the American incineration and atomic bombings that in certain circles continue to blacken our name to this day. *Retribution* takes up in wrenching detail the agonies meted out by each side to its enemy. Although the Americans inflicted more pain, the Japanese, as Hastings demonstrates, took crueler pleasure in the pain they dished out.

Rampant sadism was evidently part of the Japanese warrior's code, the macabre taste for blood shed in novel ways finding plentiful means of expression. In the words of a South African held prisoner by the Japanese on Java,

I saw innumerable ways of killing people, but, most significantly, never by just shooting them. I say "significantly" because this for me was the most striking evidence of the remote and archaic nature of the forces which had invaded the Japanese spirit, blocking out completely the light of the 20th-century day.

The very worst of Japanese viciousness was taken by the Chinese. Japan's Asian depredations had begun with the occupation of Manchuria in 1931 and attained one early climax with the Rape of Nanjing in 1937, in which perhaps 300,000 Chinese were butchered. The numbers of Chinese dead for the entire war are indeterminate: estimates range from 15 million to 50 million—although the figures at the upper end may be inflated by Chinese historians in order to diminish the horror of Mao Zedong's homegrown slaughter.

Hastings paints vividly the detail of the immense protracted massacre. Japanese soldiers used live Chinese prisoners for bayonet drill and ritual beheadings. A young "comfort woman," dragooned to service Japanese soldiers sexually, made the mistake of getting pregnant; she was hung from a tree and slit open, the baby twitching in her womb, as an edifying spectacle for all the people in her village. A Chinese boy idly tossed a rock at a Japanese soldier's dog; the soldier shot dead on the spot the boy and his two companions. The notorious Unit 731 in Manchuria performed Mengele-style medical experiments on its victims, including vivisections without benefit of anesthesia.

It may be hard to imagine such depraved conduct coexisting with an acute sense of honor, but the Japanese did have that, however heavily encrusted with blood. Hastings quotes from General Hideki Tojo's manual for soldierly conduct:

The man who would not disgrace himself must be strong. He must remember always the honor of

his family and community, and strive to justify their faith in him. Do not survive in shame as a prisoner. Die, to ensure that you do not leave ignominy behind you.

Vessels of the imperial navy did not carry lifeboats; the only alternative to victory was death. This code of honor pertained to Japanese alone; there was virtually no behavior toward an enemy that was deemed dishonorable, except for showing mercy.

THE CODE of honor joined forces with mad viciousness most dramatically in the kamikaze volunteers who bedeviled the American fleet from October 1944 until war's end. Nearly 4,000 pilots died in these suicide attacks; about one in seven struck a ship, usually causing grave harm. For the Japanese, the kamikaze pilots were rare heroes; for the Americans,

a species of poisonous flying arachnid. The fighting men of the West recognized a significant difference between risking one's life—even sacrificing it in the heat of combat—and flinging it deliberately away. "Thus," according to Hastings, "the Allies regarded the kamikazes with unfeigned repugnance as well as fear. In the last months of the war, this new terror prompted among Americans an escalation of hatred, a diminution of mercy."

Wave upon merciless wave of aerial bombardment marked the final months of the war, and Japan endured horrors that a reasonable nation could have avoided. General Curtis LeMay, head of 21st Bomber Command, engineered the series of incendiary raids on Japanese cities that included the firebombing of Tokyo on March 9, 1945, which killed 100,000 people, left a million homeless, and de-

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stroyed sixteen square miles of the capital. Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe were the objects of similar "burn jobs." Where the bombing campaign against Germany had required years to produce ruin, it took only a matter of days to devastate Japan's cities, whose buildings were more highly flammable.

LeMay sought to justify the carnage by pointing out that Japanese weaponry production was a cottage industry, and that many homes were small factories: "We were going after military targets. No point in slaughtering civilians for the mere sake of slaughter." On this point Hastings demurs, arguing that the American naval blockade had effectively choked off Japanese industry when the B-29's began their assault, and that the incendiary bombing did little to break Japan's war-making powers but much to punish the enemy.

AND THEN there was the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. LeMay thought this was re-

dundant—that his incendiary raids had already won the war. But as of early August 1945 most American brass were convinced that a massive offensive against the Japanese mainland would still be necessary for victory. What Hastings calls the "blood-cost" of such an invasion would have been extortionate: the Japanese for their part seemed willing to expend all the blood they had in repelling such an invasion, and remained obdurate in their refusal to surrender unconditionally.

Defending America's use of its nuclear weapon, Hastings answers those who would have it that Japan represented a lesser magnitude of evil than Germany and certainly did not deserve atomic destruction of two cities:

Few of those Asians who experienced Japanese conquest . . . and knew of the millions of deaths which it encompassed, believed that Japan possessed any superior claim on Allied forbearance to that of Germany. Post-war crit-

ics of U.S. conduct in the weeks before Hiroshima seem to demand from America's leaders moral and political generosity so far in advance of that displayed by their Japanese counterparts as to be fantastic, in the sixth year of a global war.

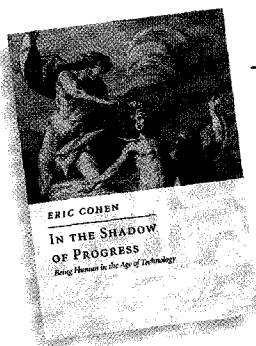
As for those who contend that Japan was prepared to surrender before Hiroshima, they are "peddlers of fantasies. . . . Even after Nagasaki, the peace party prevailed only by the narrowest of margins."

Terrible as the bombings were, Hastings avers, they were military means employed for just ends, and sought to finish the war as quickly as possible. Much Japanese behavior, on the other hand, was sheer gratuitous savagery. To this day, Japan continues to honor its brutish soldiers as war heroes and has conspicuously, indeed resolutely, failed to face its own enormities. This, Hastings writes in the peroration to his brilliant and distressing book, redounds to the country's lasting shame.

Jack Nash

1929-2008

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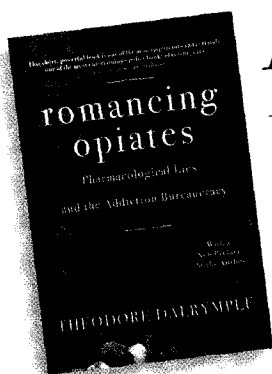
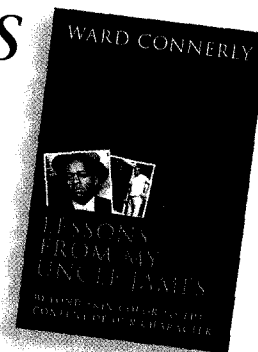
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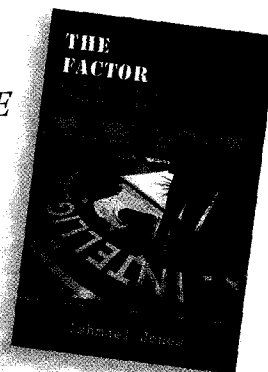
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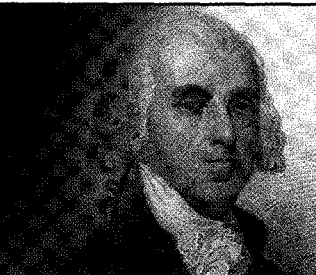
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